

**MISSION IN ACTS:  
A RHETORICAL CALL TO ACTION**

**Daniel M. McGinnis**

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**Sheffield University  
Biblical Studies Department**

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## ABSTRACT

The book of Acts is a missional text, containing many different missionary episodes and concepts. This work argues that Luke's primary purpose in writing Acts is to inspire and equip the church of his day for effective mission. It takes the form of a detailed linguistic and narrative analysis of key words, phrases, and missional passages in Acts. These are examined in the framework of four overlapping conceptual categories: missional stimuli, structures, strategies, and suffering. Acts' missional stimuli are the motivators and the power sources for mission. Acts' missional structures are the foundational physical and social building blocks for successful mission. Acts' missional strategies articulate how the worldwide mission of Jesus is to be carried out. Acts' missional suffering is practical instruction about how to respond to persecution and imprisonment when a missionary experiences it. Luke expresses all of these, with the goal of calling the church to missional action, that his readers might be Christ's witnesses, even to the ends of the earth.

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This work is dedicated to my late father, Dr. Rodney McGinnis. Your life has inspired and motivated me in so many ways...

## ABBREVIATIONS OF PERIODICALS AND OTHER WORKS

<i>ABD</i>	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
<i>AIFCS</i>	The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting
<i>AJA</i>	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
<i>ANTC</i>	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
<i>ATANT</i>	<i>Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
<i>BDAG</i>	W. Baur, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> ed.
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
<i>BNTC</i>	Black's New Testament Commentaries
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>ConBNT</i>	Coniectanea Biblica, New Testament Series
<i>CQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
<i>EHS</i>	Europäische Hochschulschriften
<i>EKK</i>	Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>ET</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<i>HTKNT</i>	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HTS</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Studies</i>
<i>ICC</i>	International Critical Commentary
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>Interp</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSNT.SS</i>	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JTC</i>	<i>Journal for Theology and the Church</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>KEK</i>	Kritisch-exegetische Kommentar über das Neue Testament
<i>LCL</i>	Loeb Classical Library
<i>LXX</i>	Septuagint
<i>NAC</i>	New American Commentary
<i>NIGTC</i>	The New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NSBT</i>	New Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>NT</i>	New Testament
<i>NTD</i>	Das Neue Testament Deutsch
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>OT</i>	Old Testament
<i>ÖTK</i>	Ökumenischer Taschenbuch Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>ResQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
<i>RSR</i>	<i>Religious Studies Review</i>
<i>RTR</i>	<i>Reformed Theological Review</i>
<i>SBL.DS</i>	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
<i>SBT</i>	Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
<i>SNTSMS</i>	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
<i>TPINTC</i>	Trinity Press International New Testament Commentaries
<i>TRE</i>	<i>Theologische Realenzyklopädie</i>
<i>TynB</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>WBC</i>	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WUNT</i>	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>



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## **PART 1 – ACTS AND MISSION**

*'It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by his own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.'*

- Acts 1.7-8 (NASB)

### **CHAPTER 1 – CHURCH HISTORY AS MISSION HISTORY**

The narrative of Acts is saturated with mission, from beginning (1.1-8) to end (28.28-31).

Every chapter, and nearly every narrative episode, is about mission in one way or another.

Acts depicts a church consumed by the missionary task. It tracks the growing group of Christ-followers, as they establish themselves in Jerusalem, expand outwards into Judea and Samaria, and evangelize many of the urban centres of the Roman Empire. Acts begins with 120 somewhat confused people (1.6-11) who have witnessed the death and resurrection of Jesus and are waiting in Jerusalem for the promised Holy Spirit (1.12-15), and ends with an expansive network of Christian churches strewn throughout much of the known world. This is the story of Acts, the story of the birth and missional expansion of the church.

#### ***1.1 A Missional Purpose***

Though Acts takes the form of historical narrative, this disguises its true purpose. This work argues that Luke's primary purpose in writing Acts is not historical, but rhetorical and exhortational. He is not merely interested in 'what happened' in the past, but in how the church of his day can learn from it (Lk 1.1-4). Acts functions as a provocation to the church of Luke's day, provoking its readers towards one primary thing: mission.

Luke articulates this purpose in Acts 1.8: 'You will *receive power* when the *Holy Spirit comes upon you*; and you will *be my witnesses* in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even *to the ends of the earth*.' Luke is inviting the church of his day to receive

the power of the Holy Spirit, and to be Christ's missionary witnesses everywhere, even to the uttermost parts of the earth. This is Luke's purpose and goal in writing Acts.

In addition to provoking his readers to action, Luke presents many missional practices in Acts. His fundamental desire is to motivate believers, but his secondary purpose is to equip them to carry out the mission effectively. In this regard, Acts is both challenging/motivational, and also thoroughly practical/instructive.

This work examines both of these dynamics, arranged into four primary overlapping categories: missional stimuli, missional structures, missional strategies, and missional suffering. Luke's missional stimuli are the motivators; they answer the question of *why* followers of Jesus must engage in mission, and what their power source will be. This is fundamental for Luke, for if the need and urgency of the occasion is not clear, his readers will not be spurred to action. The missional structures in Acts are the building blocks; they answer the question of *what* Luke's readers ought to employ in their pursuit of the mission. The missional strategies in Acts are Luke's attempt to equip his church in *how* to go about the mission to which he is calling them. Missional suffering in Acts is further training for *how* to carry out the mission, particularly when a missionary finds him or herself suffering from persecution or opposition. Luke's universal theology provides the *who* and the *where* – everyone is involved in the mission, and the message is for everyone, everywhere. Luke supplies his readers with the *why*, *what*, *how*, *who*, and *where* of Christian mission, all in not very subtle narrative form.

Understood this way, Luke's purpose in Acts is to call his church to mission, and to teach them practical ways of living this out. Acts thus functions as a catalyst to mission, and as an equipping narrative for mission. Luke constructs his narrative with these two overriding purposes in mind, and they are visible in nearly every narrative episode Luke presents. As Maddox says, 'Luke summons his fellow-Christians to worship God with

whole-hearted joy, to follow Jesus with unwavering loyalty, and to carry on with zeal, through the power of the Spirit, the charge to be his witnesses to the end of the earth.’<sup>1</sup>

## ***1.2 The Early Christian Mission in Biblical Scholarship***

The volume of literature about the foundation and faith of the early Christians is vast. There are numerous articles and monographs about subjects such as the historical Jesus, Paul’s life and theology, the doctrine of the NT, and the history of the church. However, there is surprisingly little about the missionary activity of the early church, and where mission is mentioned, it is generally narrated and summarized, rather than analyzed and carefully examined.<sup>2</sup> Most scholars focus on themes such as the origins of the church, the development of Christian doctrine, or the various conflicts between Jewish and Gentile Christians. Schnabel comments that, ‘the body of literature on the early Christian mission is not large...The missionary activity of the early church is banished to incidental remarks even in commentaries on the Acts of the Apostles or in studies on Luke’s theology.’<sup>3</sup> As Senior laments, ‘The amount of critical work on the early church’s universal mission and its attendant problems is surprisingly slim.’<sup>4</sup>

There are exceptions to this trend; early Christian mission does have a long, if insubstantial, history within NT scholarship. Von Harnack’s classic, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, which was written in German in 1902 and translated into English in 1908, is at the top of this list.<sup>5</sup> This is the first attempt at a

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<sup>1</sup> R. Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1982): 187. See ch. 16 for more details.

<sup>2</sup> This seems to be particularly true in Pauline studies: B. Witherington, *The Paul Quest: The Renewed Search for the Jew of Tarsus* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998), has almost nothing about the Pauline mission; E. P. Sanders, *Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991): 1,6-7,19-21,24-25; is the only mention of mission; J. Ziesler, *Pauline Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), contains a brief mention of mission on p. 2. This is generally typical of Pauline scholarship. For a popular example, see J. L. Shelser, ‘Reassessing an Apostle: The Quest for the Historical St. Paul’, *US News and World Report* (5 April 1999): 52-55, which contains one brief sentence about Paul’s missionary travels, and then focuses exclusively on his theology.

<sup>3</sup> E. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004): 1.6.

<sup>4</sup> D. Senior, ‘The Struggle to Be Universal: Mission as Vantage Point for New Testament Investigation’, *CBQ* 46 (1984): 63-81, citing 64.

<sup>5</sup> A. von Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, 2<sup>nd</sup> enl. and rev. ed., 2 vols., Theological Translation Library 19-20, J. Moffatt, trans., ed. (London: Williams & Norgate, 1908).

comprehensive survey of early Christian mission and its physical, social, and religious milieu. Because it was quickly translated into English, it found a broad international readership and remains an influential foundation for any study of Christian mission.

Another early work, which was in many ways a response to Harnack and a critique of early 20<sup>th</sup> century missionary methodology as epitomized by the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh (1910), is R. Allen's *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?*<sup>6</sup> After Harnack and Allen, German scholars continued to dominate the dialogue in this field, yet there are surprisingly few who deal explicitly with mission. Five primary works between 1920 and 1962 can be identified, written by Oepke (1920),<sup>7</sup> Meyer (1921-1923),<sup>8</sup> Liechtenhan (1946),<sup>9</sup> Lerle (1960),<sup>10</sup> and Goppelt (1962).<sup>11</sup>

F. Hahn wrote shortly after this, and built on many of the previous insights in his work, *Mission in the New Testament* (1963).<sup>12</sup> This is one of the few studies of the topic from this time period published in English, and it re-ignited the debate on mission in the NT in the English speaking world. A number of books on this subject followed, including M.

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<sup>6</sup> R. Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* (London: Rebert Scott Roxburghe, 1912). Allen critiques the missionary methodology of his day, comparing it to that of Paul, as found in Acts and the Pauline letters. Allen focuses on the way Paul followed the leadership of the Spirit, rather than having a preconceived plan; the way he sought open doors, and chose strategic centres suitable for the gathering of converts and the propagation of faith; his constant goal of the personal conversion of individuals; the way that he planted churches which rapidly became self-supporting and self-governing, and were not dependent on foreign workers or money; and his simple teaching, follow-up, organization, and emphasis on relational rather than structural unity. All of these are in stark contrast to the missionary methods of Allen's day, and he argues that this is why his contemporary missionaries were not experiencing the same results and effectiveness that Paul saw.

<sup>7</sup> A. Oepke, *Die Missionspredigt des Apostels Paulus: Eine Biblisch-theologische und Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1920).

<sup>8</sup> E. Meyer, *Ursprung und Anfänge des Christentums*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1921-23).

<sup>9</sup> R. Liechtenhan, *Die urchristliche Mission: Voraussetzungen, Motive und Methoden*, ATANT 9 (Basel: Zwingli, 1946).

<sup>10</sup> E. Lerle, *Proselytenwerbung und Urchristentum* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1960).

<sup>11</sup> L. Goppelt, *Die apostolische und nachapostolische Zeit, Die Kirche in ihrer Geschichte 1/A* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), in English, *Apostolic and Post-Apostolic Times*, R. A. Guelich, trans. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980). This English translation has been very influential.

<sup>12</sup> F. Hahn, *Mission in the New Testament*, F. Clarke trans., SBT 47 (London: SCM, 1965); first published in German – *Das Verständnis der Mission im Neuen Testament* (Neukirchener Verlag: Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1963).

Green's important study, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (1970), which surveyed evangelism from Paul to Origen, in the middle of the third century.<sup>13</sup>

When scholars do focus on the early Christian mission, they usually do so in general terms,<sup>14</sup> or with a Pauline focus, and often only include Acts as a sort of side-note.<sup>15</sup> Senior and Stuhlmüller's *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* is a general survey of mission in Scripture, half taken from the OT, and half from the NT.<sup>16</sup> Though its focus on mission in Acts is brief, Senior's conclusions on Acts are helpful:

A survey of Luke-Acts demonstrates that the church's universal mission is central to the evangelist's concern. The bringing of the message of salvation from its starting point in Israel to its full flowering among the Gentiles is key to the outcome of Jesus' own ministry... The Spirit lavished on the community will propel it beyond Jerusalem to the end of the earth. This worldwide mission therefore 'fulfills' the scriptures... Luke-Acts provides a theological basis for the community's mission, and wise instruction for those involved in witnessing to it.<sup>17</sup>

There are multiple works on the mission of Paul published in the last forty years, since Hahn, as well as books about the missiological conceptions of the Gospel writers.<sup>18</sup> Relatively few works focus on the Acts narrative itself; there are, however, a few notable exceptions on mission in Luke-Acts.<sup>19</sup> One such exception is *The Mission of the Early*

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<sup>13</sup> M. Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1970). This book is the most significant English treatment of mission in the early church from Green's generation. As he explains, 'The whole subject of evangelism in the early Church has been unaccountably neglected in recent years. Nothing substantial has been written in English directly on this topic since Harnack's great book, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, was translated. Harnack... lived a long time ago', 7.

<sup>14</sup> C. J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006), is a broad-sweeping look at the Bible as a holistic missionary text, and only deals with Acts specifically, 514-21. Wright's goal is, 'to develop an approach to biblical hermeneutics that sees the mission of God (and the participation in it of God's people) as a framework within which we can read the whole Bible. Mission is, in my view, a major key that unlocks the whole grand narrative of the canon of Scripture', 17.

<sup>15</sup> Even Hahn, *Mission*, only devotes 6 pages to Acts, 131-36. Other than a few casual mentions, Harnack, *Mission and Expansion*, only deals directly with Acts in 1.44-54. T. R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), has a discussion in ch. 2, 'Proclaiming a Magnificent God: The Pauline Mission', 37-72. See also R. A. Martin, *Studies in the Life and Ministry of the Early Paul and Related Issues* (Lewiston: Mellen Biblical, 1993): 93-94, 113-14, 211-40.

<sup>16</sup> D. Senior, C. Stuhlmüller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* (London: SCM, 1983). It provides a helpful overall survey, from a Roman Catholic perspective. It was fairly unique when it was first published, and has blazed the trail for other general missional surveys of the scriptures. The paltry 7 pages on Acts are understandably not very thorough, 269-76. See also, J. A. Köstenberger, P. T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*, NSBT 11 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), which offers a comprehensive theology of mission covering the OT, Second Temple Period, and NT; 127-60 focus on Acts.

<sup>17</sup> Senior & Stuhlmüller, *Biblical Foundations*, 276-77.

<sup>18</sup> See Schnabel, *Mission*, 1.6 for a summary of important works.

<sup>19</sup> See S. Wilson, *The Gentiles and the Gentile Mission in Luke-Acts*, SNTSMS 23 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), esp. 'Jewish and Gentile Missions', 219-38; H. C. Kee, *Good News to the Ends of the*



*Church to Jews and Gentiles*, which contains an article focusing on the Pentecost event and the table of nations (Acts 2.9-11),<sup>20</sup> and an article dealing with the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) and the way James' speech renounces Law-obedience as a requirement for Gentile inclusion in the early church.<sup>21</sup> This general overlooking of Acts is surprising, given that mission is the theme of the Acts narrative. This work seeks to contribute to the relatively unexplored terrain of Acts-focused mission scholarship.

There are a few other works which are primary sources for this research. The most helpful is E. J. Schnabel's recent two volume tome, *Early Christian Mission*.<sup>22</sup> This work represents another exhaustive study of early Christian mission, exactly 100 years after Harnack was first published. It is also useful for this work in that it focuses only on the first century developments.<sup>23</sup> Although Schnabel's scope (the NT) is broader than Acts, it is a primary source for this research. Schnabel has recently written another book, entitled *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies, and Methods*.<sup>24</sup> Another thorough work with a narrower scope of investigation is R. Gehring's *House Church and Mission*.<sup>25</sup>

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*Earth: The Theology of Acts* (London: SCM, 1990); C. W. Stenschke, *Luke's Portrait of Gentiles Prior to Their Coming to Faith*, WUNT 2 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1999); T. J. Lane, *Luke and the Gentile Mission: Gospel Anticipates Acts*, EHS 23 (Frankfurt: Lang, 1996).

<sup>20</sup> J. M. Scott, 'Acts 2.9-11 As an Anticipation of the Mission to the Nations', *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles*, J. Ådna, H. Kvalbein, eds. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 2000): 87-123. Scott concludes: 'The Pentecost event describes the anticipated outpouring of the Spirit on the disciples...and thus the beginning of the mission in Jerusalem, the first stage in the Spirit-impelled mission that would eventually reach the end of the earth. As such, the Pentecost event is an anticipation of the whole mission to the nations which unfolds in the rest of the Book of Acts. Our passage contains both the centripetal and centrifugal movements which are characteristic of the Book of Acts as a whole...The Diaspora Jews who gathered in Jerusalem represent 'every nation under heaven' (Acts 2.5) and point to the universalistic thrust of the Book of Acts...This whole universalistic conception is deeply rooted in Luke's Christology', 122-123.

<sup>21</sup> J. Ådna, 'James' Position at the Summit Meeting of the Apostles and the Elders in Jerusalem (Acts 15)', *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles*, J. Ådna, H. Kvalbein, eds. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 2000): 125-164. Ådna concludes: 'After God has rebuilt the fallen booth of David by establishing the *ekklesia* of Jesus, the Messiah, the time has come for freely including the Gentiles *qua* Gentiles into the people of God. The only requirements to be imposed upon them are those put down by the Scriptures in Leviticus 17-18', 161.

<sup>22</sup> E. J. Schnabel, *Early Mission*, vol. 1, *Jesus and the Twelve*, vol. 2, *Paul and the Early Church* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 1928 pages. This is a translation and revision of *Urchristliche Mission* (R. Brockhouse Verlag, 2002). This work follows directly in the footsteps of Harnack and Green (above).

<sup>23</sup> Schnabel's stated intention is to integrate old and new insights and historical-geographical and exegetical-theological material into a comprehensive description of the missionary movement of the first Christians, 1.xxiv.

<sup>24</sup> E. J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies, and Methods* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2008).

<sup>25</sup> R. W. Gehring, *House Church and Mission* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004), 408 pages. This is a translation and slight revision of a previous German work, *Hausgemeinde und Mission* (Brunnen Verlag Giessen, 2000).

The classic work on Christian mission theory is D. J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*.<sup>26</sup> On conversion in antiquity, see A. D. Nock, *Conversion*,<sup>27</sup> S. McKnight, *A Light among the Gentiles*,<sup>28</sup> M. Goodman, *Mission and Conversion*,<sup>29</sup> J. Sanders, *Charisma, Converts, Competitors*,<sup>30</sup> and most recently, M. Bird, *Crossing Over Sea and Land*.<sup>31</sup>

### ***1.3 Why Do Scholars Ignore Mission?***

The reality that there is relatively little written specifically about mission in the NT, as compared to some of the other areas of NT scholarship such as theology, biography, or historical interests, actually dishonours and misrepresents the texts that exegetes work with, which are often missionary texts by definition. Additionally, it raises the question as to why this noticeable reticence to delve into matters of mission from a scholarly perspective exists.

Among Pauline scholars, much of this hesitancy must have to do with the generally accepted conviction that ‘Paul is important for us today as a theologian’ while being ‘primarily a missionary’ for the early church.<sup>32</sup> This trend in Pauline exegesis leads interpreters to largely ignore Paul’s missional practice and methodology, while embracing his theology. This approach is problematic, for much of Paul’s theology is missional at the core, and attempting to divorce the two is nearly impossible. If scholars are to take Paul seriously, not to mention Acts and the rest of the NT, they must pay attention to his missional teaching and practice, as a core aspect of his theology.

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<sup>26</sup> D. J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 6th ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991). See 1-11 for a discussion of the definitions, terminology, and issues involved, 41-55 for Bosch’s thoughts on the early Christian mission, and 123-80 for the Pauline mission. His primary contribution is in tracing the shifts and development of contemporary missionary theory.

<sup>27</sup> A. D. Nock, *Conversion: The Old and New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961; orig. 1933).

<sup>28</sup> S. McKnight, *A Light Among the Gentiles: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

<sup>29</sup> M. Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).

<sup>30</sup> J. T. Sanders, *Charisma, Converts, Competitors: Societal and Sociological Factors in the Success of Early Christianity* (London: SCM, 2000).

<sup>31</sup> M. F. Bird, *Crossing Over Sea and Land: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2010).

<sup>32</sup> H Hübner, ‘Paulus, Apostel I. Neues Testament’, *TRE* 26 (1995): 133-53, citing 133, as translated in Schnabel, *Mission*, 1.6.

There is a trend within modern theology to emphasize 'internal' doctrine and theology, and to de-emphasize 'external' missional practice. Theological heavyweights of the twentieth century such as Bultmann<sup>33</sup> and Barth<sup>34</sup> have contributed to and strengthened this position. It is difficult to overestimate their influence on modern Christian thought and theology, and Christian mission and outreach is not one of their primary interests. Instead, they emphasize other areas of theology, particularly the inner life of the believer, and the inwardly focused fellowship of the Christian community.

While theology is the study of God and his word (*theo + logos*), this artificial divorce between God's being and his mission does not reflect the reality of biblical teaching, where God's nature and his purposes are consistently and inextricably linked.<sup>35</sup> Mission is a vital and central aspect of biblical theology; the internal life and the external life of the believer should be wed together in a holistic and authentic way. Biblical theology is incomplete without an outwardly missional focus.

A recent exception to this trend in biblical theology is I. H. Marshall's *New Testament Theology*.<sup>36</sup> Marshall recognizes the centrality of mission in the NT and its theology, and in his introductory chapter on 'How to do New Testament Theology', says this:

New Testament theology is essentially missionary theology. By this I mean that the documents came into being as the result of a two-part mission, first, the mission of Jesus...then the mission of his followers called on to continue his work by proclaiming him as Lord and Savior, and calling people to faith and ongoing commitment to him, as a result of which his church grows. The theology springs out of this movement and is shaped by it, and in turn the theology shapes the continuing mission of the church...A recognition of this missionary character of the [NT] documents will help us to see them in true perspective and to interpret them in the light of their intention. They are at one and the same time the product of a dynamic process of evangelism

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. R. K. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), first published in 1951 (vol. 1) and 1955 (vol. 2). This work is an influential NT theology, which speaks largely on faith, grace, the activity of the Spirit, ethics, and Christian self-understanding, but has very little to say about Christian mission.

<sup>34</sup> Similarly, K. Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), first published in German in 1963, focuses on the inner life of the Christian, in prayer, study, love, etc., and has little on the outward, missional experience of the Christian, though cf. 26-36, 'The Witnesses'. Cf. also K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Louisville: John Knox, 1994), originally published in German in 1957, and in English in 1961. This work speaks at length about the knowledge of God, Christology, and the Christian's union with Christ, but not at all about the Christian's mission and witness in the world.

<sup>35</sup> God is missional at the core, according to the NT, and the study of his nature must reflect this reality.

<sup>36</sup> I. H. Marshall, *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004). Cf. also, T. R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008).

and nurture, and the tools for accomplishing that process...Essentially the New Testament is a collection of books that express the gospel or good news that was proclaimed in the Christian mission...<sup>37</sup>

Another reason why scholars overlook mission in the NT is the difficult issue of how to transfer specific methodologies and practices across two thousand years of history, from a mysterious ancient world to a vastly different modern world. Theoretical concepts seem to transfer easier than concrete practices.<sup>38</sup> However, disregarding the methodologies of a text's main characters is academically imprudent. For many readers, Acts is more practical than it is theological, and to consign it to the ambiguity of 'mere theology' and theory is to do it a disservice. Ancient Christian missional practices surely have some degree of relevance for contemporary Christians and theologians.

Other factors that contribute to the overlooking of missional subjects in Acts and the NT are rooted in the history of Christian mission, which has certainly been a 'mixed tale'.<sup>39</sup> The phenomenon of colonialism has specifically scarred many scholars.<sup>40</sup> International mission efforts have often been intertwined with colonial practices, and colonizers often saw themselves as missionaries from the civilized world, coming to save the 'pagans' of faraway lands. This embarrassment has made missionary work a taboo in some circles, because it can carry with it the connotation of cultural superiority, and the subjugation of other 'inferior' peoples.<sup>41</sup> Inherent in this discussion is the notion of 'authority', which is unappealing for

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<sup>37</sup> Marshall, *NT Theology*, 34-36. It is thus oriented towards mission throughout, recognizing the core theme of the NT scriptures. Marshall's point about the centrality of mission is most true of Acts.

<sup>38</sup> Because of this difficulty, this work will refrain from making contemporary application until the final chapter of this research, when the framework for such modern application will begin to be built.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. A. Le Grys, *Preaching to the Nations: The Origin of Mission in the Early Church* (London: SPCK, 1998): 172-73, for a summary of unpleasant parochial and triumphalist missional episodes: 'For centuries Christian mission has been characterized by such power struggles: from Gregory the Great anxious to extend Roman authority over the Celtic Church in Britain, through Charlemagne, with his chilling diktat to conquered Saxons in 785 ("be baptized or die"), on to the crusades and the Machiavellian manoeuvres of the sixteenth-century papacy, designed to support the imperial aspirations of Spain and Portugal. The history of Christian missions is sometimes quite sobering.'

<sup>40</sup> Hence the field of post-colonial studies. Related tragedies in history, such as the crusades, or the Spanish inquisition, have also added to the general attitude of suspicion and mistrust towards Christian missions.

<sup>41</sup> This kind of imperialist ideology has often been abusive and exploitative. On Protestant missionary work and imperialism see B. Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990).

many contemporary scholars.<sup>42</sup> While many atrocities were committed in the name of missions and the Christian God during colonial rule and at other times as well, this should not automatically disqualify mission from the modern scholarly dialogue.

Related to this is the dilemma of religious pluralism and relativism, a central aspect of current postmodern philosophy.<sup>43</sup> Many people, when confronted with the myriad of religious options available to them, struggle to say that one is better than another.<sup>44</sup> In doing so, any form of absolute truth is rejected.<sup>45</sup> This epistemological relativism renders most forms of mission irrelevant, for at its core mission is the attempt to persuade a nonbeliever to believe in a particular god or religious system, based on an implied exclusive truth claim.

Every person must decide how to navigate these cultural and philosophical quandaries for themselves. Yet, as this paper will show, mission is indivisibly woven into the very fabric of Acts. Whatever biblical scholars make of that for life and practice today, to overlook this textual reality is only to their detriment. Missional theology and practice must come to the forefront of contemporary Biblical Studies, if readers are to carry out their exegetical and hermeneutical responsibilities with integrity. D. Wenham claims that 'New Testament theology is all about the divine mission to the world.'<sup>46</sup> If that is true, then biblical interpretation must be missiological at the core.

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<sup>42</sup> Schnabel claims, 'it remains an existentialist (and thoroughly Western!) illusion to posit that a world without authority is possible or even desirable', *Paul the Missionary*, 27.

<sup>43</sup> For an introduction to relativism, see P. O'Grady, *Relativism* (Chesham: Acumen, 2002); G. Harman, *Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

<sup>44</sup> See J. Runzo, *Reason, Relativism and God* (London: MacMillan, 1986); R. Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>45</sup> The practical, ethical and philosophical consequences of such a decision are significant. See C. Norris, *Against Relativism: Philosophy of Science, Deconstruction, and Critical Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997); R. Hoggart, *The Crisis of Relativism* (London: Turnstile, 1980).

<sup>46</sup> In his contribution to G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., D. A. Hagner, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993): 712-13.

## CHAPTER 2 – METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

### 2.1 Background – Foundational Aspects and Sources in Acts Scholarship

A thorough treatment of the general literature on Acts would be counterproductive to the narrower aims of this work. Instead, a list of principal sources on Acts will be supplied.<sup>1</sup>

#### 2.1.1 General Aspects and Sources

The Greek NT is a primary source,<sup>2</sup> along with a critical guide to the textual variations.<sup>3</sup> It is essential to have an understanding of the Jewish background of Acts.<sup>4</sup> There are many recent commentaries on Acts, of both the critical more popular varieties.<sup>5</sup> The five-volume *The*

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<sup>1</sup> This is not an exhaustive listing, but contains some of the more helpful works to this project. For a recent challenge to many of the approaches to Acts scholarship, and a call for a more critical methodological examination of Acts, see, T. Penner, 'Madness in the Method? The Acts of the Apostles in Current Study', *Currents in Biblical Research* 2 (2004): 223-93. On Acts' interpretation, see W. W. Gasque, *A History of the Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1989).

<sup>2</sup> B. Aland, K. Aland, J. Karavidopoulos, C. M. Martini, B. M. Metzger, eds., *Greek New Testament*, 4<sup>th</sup> rev. ed. (London: United Bible Societies, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament (UBS4)*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: United Bible Society, 1994), discusses the textual variations in the critical apparatus.

<sup>4</sup> See H. Le Cornu, *A Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Acts*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Netivvah Bible Instruction Ministry, 2003). The influence of Isaiah on Acts is particularly noteworthy, D. W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002). For Jewish primary references, see J. H. Charlesworth, ed., *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1985); H. F. D. Sparks, *The Apocryphal Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984); G. Vermes, trans., *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: Penguin, 1998); J. Neusner, trans., *The Mishnah* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); LCL for other classical texts cited.

<sup>5</sup> Commentaries consulted, by date: R. I. Pervo, *Acts*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009); M. C. Parsons, *Acts*, Paideia (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008); B. R. Gaventa, *The Acts of the Apostles*, ANTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003); J. Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, KEK 17 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998); B. Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Anchor Bible 31 (New York: Doubleday, 1998); C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Acts of the Apostles*, 2 vols., ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994-98); H. C. Kee, *To Every Nation Under Heaven: The Acts of the Apostles* (Harrisburg: Trinity, 1997); J. D. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Valley Forge: Trinity, 1996); R. N. Longenecker, *Acts* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995); L. T. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1992); J. B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC 26 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992); R. C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, vol. 2, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek text with Introduction and Commentary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., rev. and enl. (Leicester: Apollos, 1990); G. Lüdemann, *Early Christianity According to the Traditions in Acts*, J. Bowden, trans. (London: SCM, 1989); J. Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, NTD 5 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988); H. Conzelmann, *A Commentary on The Acts of the Apostles*, J. Limburg, A. T. Kraabel, D. H. Juel, trans., E. J. Epp, C. R. Matthews, eds. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987; orig. Tübingen, 1963); R. Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 2 vols., EKK 1 & 2 (Zürich: Neikirchen-Vluyn, 1986); G. A. Krodel, *Acts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986); A. Weiser, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 2 vols., ÖTK 5 (Gütersloh/Würzburg, 1981-85); I. H. Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Leicester: Intervarsity, 1980); C. S. C. Williams, *The Acts of the Apostles*, BNTC 5 (London: A & C Black, 1964); G. Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 2 vols., HTKNT 5 (Freiburg: Herder, 1980-82); E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, B. Noble, G. Shinn, trans., R. M. Wilson, trans. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971; orig. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956); H. J. Cadbury, K. Lake, *The Acts of the Apostles: English Translation and Commentary, The Beginnings of Christianity* 4, J. Foakes-Jackson, K. Lake, eds. (London: Macmillan, 1920-33).

*Book of Acts in its First-Century Setting* is an analysis of various features of Acts as illuminated by its historical and cultural background.<sup>6</sup> There are also numerous works on aspects of the Acts narrative, such as its theology and purpose,<sup>7</sup> literary genre,<sup>8</sup> style and structure,<sup>9</sup> treatment of the Jews,<sup>10</sup> and use of OT scripture.<sup>11</sup>

### 2.1.2 Historicity

There is a long and vigorous debate about the historical reliability of the book of Acts and its implications in modern scholarly circles.<sup>12</sup> This includes works about some of the 'problem areas' within Acts, such as the difference between Paul in his own letters and Paul in Acts (as

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<sup>6</sup> B. W. Winter, ed., AIIFCS, vol. 1, *The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting*, vol. 2, *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, vol. 3, *Paul in Roman Custody*, vol. 4, *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting*, vol. 5, *The Book of Acts in Its Diaspora Setting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993-96).

<sup>7</sup> Maddox, *Purpose*; H. C. Kee, *Good News to the Ends of the Earth: The Theology of Acts* (London: SCM, 1990); I. H. Marshall, D. Peterson, eds., *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); I. H. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988); R. F. O'Toole, *The Unity of Luke's Theology* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1984); F. Bovon, *Luke the Theologian: Fifty-five Years of Research (1950-2005)*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> L. C. A. Alexander, 'Fact, Fiction and the Genre of Acts', *NTS* 44 (1998): 380-99, & *Acts in Its Ancient Literary Context* (London: T&T Clark, 2006); D.W. Palmer, 'Acts and the Ancient Historical Monograph', 1-30, & B. S. Rosner, 'Acts and Biblical History', 65-82, *Acts in its Ancient Literary Setting*, B. W. Winter, A. D. Clarke, eds., AIIFCS 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); B. Witherington, ed., *History, Literature and Society in the Book of Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); R. I. Pervo, *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), & *Acts*, 14-18; D. E. Aune, 'Luke-Acts and Ancient Historiography', 77-111: 'Luke-Acts is a popular "general history" written by an amateur Hellenistic historian with credentials in Greek rhetoric...', 77, and the bibliography on ancient historiography of different kinds, 112-115, *The New Testament in its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987).

<sup>9</sup> H. J. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: SPCK, 1958); J. T. Squires, *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> Some scholars see anti-Semitism/anti-Judaism in Luke-Acts: J. T. Sanders, *The Jews in Luke-Acts* (London: SCM, 1987); N.A. Beck, *Mature Christianity: The Recognition and Repudiation of the Anti-Jewish Polemic of the New Testament* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1985), i.e., 207. Others see Luke as the most favourable NT author towards the Jews: R. L. Brawley, *Luke-Acts and the Jews: Conflict, Apology, and Conciliation* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1987); F. Bovon, 'Studies in Luke-Acts: Retrospect and Prospect', *HTR* 85 (1992): 175-96. For a balanced view, cf. C. A. Evans, J. A. Sanders, *Luke and Scripture: The Function of Sacred Tradition in Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993); D. Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002): 129-154; J. B. Tyson, *Images of Judaism in Luke-Acts* (Columbia: University Press of S. Carolina, 1992).

<sup>11</sup> L. C. A. Alexander, 'This is That: The Authority of Scriptures in the Acts of the Apostles,' *History and Exegesis*, S. Son, ed. (London: T&T Clark, 2006): 55-72; Evans & Sanders, *Luke and Scripture*; G. J. Steyn, *Septuagint Quotations in the Context of the Petrine and Pauline Speeches of the Acta Apostolorum* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1995); K. D. Litwack, *Echoes of Scripture in Luke-Acts* (London: T&T Clark, 2005); B. J. Koet, *Five Studies on Interpretation of Scripture in Luke-Acts* (Leuven: University, 1989); R. L. Brawley, *Text to Text Pours Forth Speech: Voices of Scripture in Luke-Acts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); Meek, J. A., *The Gentile Mission in Old Testament Citations in Acts* (London: T&T Clark, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> For a summary, see C. K. Barrett, 'The Historicity of Acts', *JTS* 50, (1999): 515-535. See also, C. J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, C. H. Gempf, ed. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1989); G. E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephus, Luke-Acts and Apologetic Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 1992); M. Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*, H. Greeven, ed., M. Ling, trans. (London: SCM, 1956); M. Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity* (London: SCM, 1979); Marguerat, *Historian*; Alexander, 'Fact, Fiction and the Genre of Acts'.

seen in narrative detail,<sup>13</sup> chronology,<sup>14</sup> and theology<sup>15</sup>), the speeches in Acts,<sup>16</sup> Luke's use of sources in Acts,<sup>17</sup> the textual problem in Acts,<sup>18</sup> and the prevalence of miracles in Acts.<sup>19</sup>

This work is operating under the assumption of the *general plausibility* of the Acts narrative,<sup>20</sup> which is strengthened and substantiated by Luke's accuracy and attention to

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<sup>13</sup> E.g., Paul's letters, the Jerusalem collection (1 Cor 16.1; Rom 15.26; though cf. Acts 11.29,30; 24.17), and his contentious relationship with the Jerusalem community (Gal 2), all of which Acts is largely silent about. See C. K. Barrett, 'Acts and the Pauline Corpus', *ET* 88 (1976): 2-5.

<sup>14</sup> E.g., Paul's post-conversion years, & the Jerusalem council. R. A. Jewett, *A Chronology of Paul's Life* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979); R. Riesner, *Paul's Early Period: Chronology, Mission Strategy, Theology*, D. Stott, trans. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); G. Lüdemann, *Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles: Studies in Chronology* (London: SCM, 1984); L. C. A. Alexander, 'Chronology of Paul', *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, G. Hawthorne, R. Martin, D. G. Reid, eds. (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1993): 115-23; Witherington, *Acts*, 77-97; Schneider, *Apostel.*, 1.129-33; S. G. Wilson, *Luke and the Pastoral Epistles* (London: SPCK, 1979): 117ff. Jerusalem Council: Bruce, *Acts*, 331; Marshall, *Acts*, 244-47; Dunn, *Acts*, 195-98; Conzelmann, *Acts*, 121; Haenchen, *Acts*, 455-68.

<sup>15</sup> E.g., Paul's views on circumcision (cf. e.g., Gal 5.3-6, Acts 16.3; 21.21-26), the question of the Law (cf. e.g., Rom 3.21-26, Acts 21.20), his identity as a Pharisee (cf. e.g., Phil 3.4-9, Acts 23.6; 26.5-8), and his theology of the cross and justification by faith alone (cf. e.g., Eph 2.4-9, Acts 20.28). Every commentary discusses these points. Some scholars argue that Acts should be taken almost as seriously as Paul's writings in reconstructing the historical account, Hemer, *Acts*, 14-29; Witherington, *Acts*, 86-88. The differences can largely be explained by a general lack of understanding of Paul's teaching (cf. 2 Pet 3.15-16), a different purpose in writing, and the different perspective Luke is writing from; Hengel, *Acts*, 66-67; Dunn, *Acts*, xvii.

<sup>16</sup> M. L. Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns* (Louisville: Westminster, 1994). Cf. Witherington, *Acts*, 116-20. Luke conforms to ancient speech reporting conventions: they are not 'transcripts', but as accurate as possible, and appropriate to the occasion. C. W. Fornara, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Berkeley: University Press of Cal., 1983): 154-61; Dunn, *Acts*, xviii.

<sup>17</sup> J. Dupont, *The Sources of Acts: The Present Position* (London: Darton, Longman, 1964); G. Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*; Johnson, *Acts*, 3; Dunn, *Acts*, xvi; Witherington, *Acts*, 169-70. The general consensus is that Luke did have some reliable sources, including possibly his own experiences and travel journals, but it is almost impossible to differentiate between sources in the text, because he so thoroughly rewrites them.

<sup>18</sup> The two 'editions' are both very old, proved for the Alexandrian (Old Uncial) by p<sup>45</sup>, B, &, Clement of Alexandria and Origen, and for the Western (Codex Bezae) by p<sup>38</sup>, p<sup>48</sup>, Tertullian, Cyprian, and the Syriac tradition; E. J. Epp, *The Theological Tendency of Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis in Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966); F. Pack, 'The "Western" Text of Acts', *ResQ* 4 (1960): 220-34, who begins by saying, 'no problem in the textual criticism of the New Testament has been more perplexing or vexing than the problem of the text of Acts. Here more than in any other New Testament book the divergences between text-types are evident', 220, and demonstrates the explanatory and harmonistic nature of the Western text. The general consensus is that the Alexandrian is the older and more reliable text, though the Western text may reflect original or divergent traditions in places. Hemer, *Acts*, 53-57; Barrett, *Acts*, 1.2-29; Witherington, *Acts*, 65-68.

<sup>19</sup> G. W. H. Lampe, 'Miracles in the Acts of the Apostles,' *Miracles: Cambridge Studies in their Philosophy and History*, C. F. D. Moule, ed. (London: Mowbray, 1965): 165-78. See this work also for a survey of the way other ancient historians handled the miraculous, e.g., MacDonald, 'Herodotus on the Miraculous', Mackay, 'Plutarch and the Miraculous'. Cf. Hemer's treatment of this question, *Acts*, 428-43. Luke is operating within the worldview of his day.

<sup>20</sup> This means that what Acts contains is possible and reasonable – it could have occurred that way. Luke clearly has an apologetic agenda in what he is writing – he chooses his material selectively, edits it thoroughly, and arranges it creatively. He is also writing under the conventions of ancient history, which are different from those of today. There are undeniable historical problems in the text, such as the date of the census and identity of Theudas and Judas of Galilee (Acts 5.36-37 – Barrett, *Acts*, 1.293-296), and how Luke knew the details of the *private* discussion between Festus and Agrippa (Acts 25.13ff).



detail,<sup>21</sup> and by the relevant archaeological and inscriptional evidence.<sup>22</sup> Because a final form reading of Acts is being taken here (see below), the historicity question is not central. This work is not primarily interested in ‘what happened’, but in what Acts says happened.

### 2.1.3 Authorship, Recipient and Date

Many have debated about Acts’ authorship, and this work concludes with the majority of scholars in these regards: the author of Acts is the third evangelist (cf. Acts 1.1; Lk 1.1-4),<sup>23</sup> likely a co-worker and sometimes travelling companion of Paul,<sup>24</sup> and possibly Luke the Physician, though this is less certain (Col 4.14).<sup>25</sup> The author of Acts will be referred to as

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<sup>21</sup> Esp. in geography (though not as accurately in Palestine), local colour, names, titles, and legal procedures. Hemer, *Acts*, documents many of these, e.g., 108-58, 206-10. Also, Bruce, *Acts*, 31-32; M. Hengel, ‘The Geography of Palestine in Acts’, *Acts in Its Palestinian Setting*, R. Bauckham, ed., AIFCS 4: 27-78; A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963): 172-89.

<sup>22</sup> E.g., Sergius Paulus (Acts 13.7), A. Nobbs, ‘Cyprus’, *Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, AIFCS 2: 279-89; Derbe (Acts 14.20), Hemer, *Acts*, 112; Gallio (Acts 18.12), Barrett, *Acts*, 2.870; D. W. J. Gill, B. W. Winter, ‘Acts and Roman Religion’, *Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, AIFCS 2: 98-103; Politarchs (Acts 17.6), G. H. R. Horsley, ‘The Politarchs’, *Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, AIFCS 2: 419-31; Barrett, *Acts*, 2.814-15; I. Levinskaya, ‘God-fearers’, *Acts in Its Diaspora Setting*, AIFCS 5: 51-125; Hemer, *Acts*, 444-47.

<sup>23</sup> The parallels in style and language point to this conclusion, as does their common tone, universal perspective, interest in Gentiles, sympathetic treatment of women, and shared apologetic tendency. Cf. Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*; J. M. Dawsey, ‘The Literary Questions of Style - A Task for Literary Critics,’ *NTS* 35 (1989): 48-66; C. H. Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes and the Genre of Luke-Acts* (Missoula: Scholars, 1975): 16-18. For a challenge to the unity of Luke-Acts, in terms of genre, canon and theology (not author), and a call for a more nuanced approach, see M. C. Parsons, R. I. Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993): ‘If Acts is to receive its due, it must be regarded as something more than an extension of Luke. Just as Luke is complete in and of itself, so is Acts. The relationships between these two books are relations *between two books*... “Luke and Acts” is therefore a more accurate designation of the relationship these books have to each other’, 126. Similarly, ‘Das Evangelium und die Apostelgeschichte sind also zwei Werke von demselben Verfasser, und nicht zwei Teile eines Buches’, Jervell, *Apostel.*, 57, no. 23.

<sup>24</sup> The ‘we passages’ (Acts 16.10-17; 20.5-21.18; 27.1-28.16; D – 11.28) are a much-debated phenomenon. The most natural explanation is that the author was a traveling companion and an eyewitness to the events recorded within those passages. *Gehring, House*, 62, speaks of a turning point in the assessment of the historical value of Acts over the last 20 years, largely precipitated by a return to the view that Luke was a traveling companion of Paul. See H. J. Cadbury, ‘“We” and “I” Passages in Luke-Acts,’ *NTS* 3 (1957): 128-32; Hengel, *Acts*, 66-68; Conzelmann, *Acts*, xxxviii-xl; Lüdemann, *Paul*, 23; W.G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, H. C. Kee, trans., rev. ed. (London: SCM, 1966): 102-5, 127-30; Witherington, *Acts*, 53-54; Hemer, *Acts*, 312-334; Marshall, *Luke: Historian*, 13-76. See E. Haenchen, ‘“We” in Acts and the Itinerary’, *JTC* 1 (1965): 65-99; Pervo, *Acts*, 392-96, for surveys of alternate explanations of the ‘we’ in “Acts”.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. also Phlm 24; 2 Tim 4.11. The earliest patristic references (belonging to the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century – the Anti-Marcionite Prologue to Luke, the Muratorian Fragment, Irenaeus, and Clement of Alexandria – 3<sup>rd</sup> century) ascribe authorship to ‘Luke the physician’. Cf. Barrett, *Acts*, 1.15-29, Bruce, *Acts*, 1-3 for the external evidence of the authorship of Acts. The argument that Luke was a doctor because of his use of ancient medical terms, W. K. Hobart, *The Medical Language of St. Luke*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1954, orig. 1882), has been refuted by H. J. Cadbury, *The Style and Literary Method of Luke* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920), who shows that these same terms can be found in non-medical writers such as Plutarch and Lucian.

Luke throughout this work. Luke is an educated author,<sup>26</sup> who shows familiarity with different types of ancient literature,<sup>27</sup> and also with the highest social classes of his day.<sup>28</sup> Luke's ethnicity is unclear,<sup>29</sup> although he is most likely a God-fearer of long-standing or a Jew,<sup>30</sup> who has received a Hellenistic education, and writes to a largely Gentile audience.<sup>31</sup>

Luke writes to the 'most honourable Theophilus' (κράτιστε Θεόφιλε, Lk 1.1-4; cf. Acts 1.1), who is likely an upper class recent Christian convert or strong Christian sympathizer,<sup>32</sup> and also very likely Luke's patron.<sup>33</sup> Scholarly estimates on the date of the composition of Acts vary from 62 to 130 CE, though most date Acts between 70 and 90 CE.<sup>34</sup> This is after the latest event in the book (Acts 28.30-31, probably 60-61), and before the

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<sup>26</sup> Luke's Greek is the best in the NT, with the possible exception of Hebrews. See Cadbury, *Style and Literary Method*, 1-39. Acts 27 is one of the literary peaks of the NT. Cadbury, *Making of Luke-Acts*, 220; D. L. Mealand, 'Hellenistic Historians and the Style of Acts', *ZNW* 82 (1991): 42-66, citing 59. The best in the NT is not that impressive compared to other Greek writers – Pervo says Luke 'could write in middlebrow Koine Greek', *Acts*, 7. For a bibliography on Luke's language and style, see Jervell, *Apostel.*, 72-76.

<sup>27</sup> Luke seems to know the conventions of Greco-Roman rhetoric, which indicates that he had progressed to the higher levels of Greco-Roman education. E. P. Parks, *The Roman Rhetorical Schools as a Preparation for the Courts under the Early Empire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1945): 62-97.

<sup>28</sup> Luke appeals to the upper classes: Acts 23.26; 24.3; 26.25, other occurrences of 'excellent', as his address to Theophilus, and the Cornelius narrative (chs. 10, 11). Fornara, *History in Ancient Greece and Rome*, 49.

<sup>29</sup> The traditional view is that Luke is a Gentile, based on the (supposed) absence of Semitic expressions, the omission of Jewish concerns in the Gospel, the sensitivity to Gentile Christianity, and the quality of the Greek, Kümmel, *Introduction*, 149. However, his thorough knowledge of the LXX, the accurate reflection of Judaism in the infancy narrative (Lk 1-2), and his concern for the Jews throughout Luke and Acts point towards Luke being a Jew. Cf. M. Wilcox, *The Semitisms of Acts*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965). See Sterling, *Historiography*, 327 for recent advocates of this view.

<sup>30</sup> M. Salmon, 'Insider or Outsider? Luke's Relationship with Judaism', *Luke-Acts and the Jewish People*, J. B. Tyson, ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988): 76-82, notes that the author distinguishes among groups of Jews (outsiders tend not to do this), devotes a great deal of attention to Torah observance, is interested in the Gentile mission (a Jewish perspective), and presents Christianity as a ἀρεταίς (24.5, 14; 28.22, the same as a Jewish sect).

<sup>31</sup> Following Sterling, *Historiography*, 328.

<sup>32</sup> The title κράτιστε (Lk 1.3) suggests a high social status. Cf. Acts 23.26; 24.3 (Felix); 26.25 (Festus). Witherington, *Acts*, 64.

<sup>33</sup> Dunn, *Acts*, xi. As a patron, he would have served as a financial resource for Luke's research and writing, and also drawn attention to Luke's writings among the literate and governing classes.

<sup>34</sup> For scholars' dating of Acts, cf. Sterling, *Historiography*, 329-30. Bruce and Marshall are the earliest (62-70), Conzelmann, Schneider, Danker, Witherington, and many others are in the middle (70-100), and O'Neil, Knox, Townsend and Pervo are the latest (100-130). Cf. R. I. Pervo, *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologists* (Santa Rosa: Polebridge, 2006), and *Acts*, 5-7, for recent arguments advocating that an anonymous author wrote Acts c. 115, largely to protect established Pauline communities from external and internal threats. Such a late date would clearly rule out the author being a companion of Paul. 80-85 is a likely date, which lines up with the majority opinion (advocated by Dupont, Hengel, Kümmel, Pesch, Polhill, Roloff, Schneider, Vielhauer, Weiser, C. S. C. Williams, and many others; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 54) – early enough for Luke to be personally familiar with the details he reports, but late enough to afford him the historical perspective with which he writes. A precise and detailed dating of Acts is not essential to this work, so 80-85 will suffice.

Pauline corpus was formed (probably in the mid 90s).<sup>35</sup> It would also allow for the historical perspective with which Luke writes to develop.<sup>36</sup>

Although much more can be said about each of these areas of Acts scholarship, they are not the direct topic of this research. With these general foundations in mind, the methodological approaches to this investigation of mission in Acts can be identified.

## ***2.2 Methodological Approaches – Towards a Final Form Reading of Acts***

All the forms of biblical criticism have been applied to Acts, with varying results.<sup>37</sup> This research employs multiple methods within NT studies, and purposefully avoids others.

### ***2.2.1 A Final Form Holistic Reading of Acts***

A shift can be observed in Biblical Studies in the last 30 years towards an analysis of the 'final form' of the text as the preferred style for biblical hermeneutics.<sup>38</sup> J. Barton gives three primary reasons for this development. The first is theological – the final form is the only proper object for the biblical exegete to analyze because it is the text which the Jewish and Christian community has canonized as their authoritative text.<sup>39</sup> The second is related to new forms of literary criticism, which approach the biblical text as one would approach a novel, reading it as a finished product.<sup>40</sup> A literary history of a text can be written, but 'we should read what is on the page to be read, not trouble ourselves with what may have preceded it.'<sup>41</sup>

The third factor is disillusionment with the work of traditional historical criticism, and

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<sup>35</sup> Luke betrays very little knowledge of Paul's writings. See C. L. Mitton, *The Formation of the Pauline Corpus of Letters* (London: Epworth, 1955), and J. Finegan, 'The Original Form of the Pauline Collection,' *HTR* 49 (1956): 85-103, who goes through the available evidence on date, and the earliest form and order of the Pauline corpus. See Barrett, *Acts*, 1.34-48 for the early literary allusions to Acts.

<sup>36</sup> Sterling, *Historiography*, 330; Bruce, *Acts*, 18.

<sup>37</sup> See S. L. McKenzie, S. R. Haynes, eds., *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993), which has chapters on all the fields of biblical criticism; S. Prickett, ed., *Reading the Text: Biblical Criticism and Literary Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

<sup>38</sup> J. Barton, *The Old Testament: Canon, Literature and Theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007): 181. This has been advanced by B. S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (London: SCM, 1992); J. A. Sanders, *From Sacred Story to Sacred Text: Canon as Paradigm* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

<sup>39</sup> 'The Church did not transmit and deliver to us its scriptures so that we could dig beneath them, but so that we could read them in their finished form... That which God has joined together, let no man put asunder', Barton, *Canon*, 185-86.

<sup>40</sup> E.g., R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981), and *Canon and Creativity: Modern Writing and the Authority of Scripture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

<sup>41</sup> Barton, *Canon*, 186.

particularly source analysis of a text. Many scholars recognize that historical criticism has not actually advanced their understanding of the text,<sup>42</sup> and that the text may have never been created from multiple sources in the first place.<sup>43</sup>

This trend towards final form analysis is leading many towards a ‘holistic’ interpretive approach, taking the text as it is today, as a whole.<sup>44</sup> This sort of reading can produce exciting new interpretations, and is a way to avoid becoming bogged down in guessing about supposed earlier sources, none of which are known in the case of Acts.<sup>45</sup> This work will pursue a final form, holistic analysis of the text of Acts, as it exists today.<sup>46</sup>

### 2.2.2 *Literary Criticism and Textual Criticism*

The previous section has sought to briefly address some of the questions that historical criticism raises, such as authorship, recipient, date, origin, and historical setting. The duration of this work will largely operate in the literary criticism realm, interested not so much in the historical realities Acts addresses, but in what its purpose and meaning is as a text. This will be examined at two points in time – when it was first received, and today. Before Acts can be analyzed in this way, the text must be established, which is the realm of textual criticism. As has already been seen, the textual difficulties within Acts are

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. R. N. Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1987).

<sup>43</sup> Barton, *Canon*, 187.

<sup>44</sup> This move away from textual criticism and towards a ‘pre-critical’ interest in the finished form ‘has produced a sharp cleft between the English- and the German-speaking worlds in biblical studies’, Barton, *Canon*, 181.

<sup>45</sup> This leads towards a holistic reading of the biblical canon, for the context of Act, which moves towards canonical criticism, and the question of what the scriptural canon is composed of. Is this a Catholic, Protestant, even a Jewish canon? This work will focus on a holistic reading of Acts, and avoid the larger canonical issues.

<sup>46</sup> Barton, *Canon*, 187-91, highlights some questions that this ‘final form’ approach raises, such as the canonical questions (mentioned above), the dilemma about where differing ancient versions fit into the theory (such as the LXX as compared to the Masoretic text of the OT), and how exactly one arrives at the final form of a text (esp. one as complicated as Acts, with multiple divergent textual traditions).

significant.<sup>47</sup> This final form reading will mention instances when Codex Bezae is relevant,<sup>48</sup> but follow the Alexandrian text.<sup>49</sup>

### 2.2.3 Source and Redaction Criticism

It can be supposed that Luke is using specific sources for some portions of the text of Acts (Lk 1.1-3), and scholars have attempted to identify these sources within Acts.<sup>50</sup> If he was a sometimes travelling companion of Paul, Luke would have had his own eyewitness accounts and travel journals, along with opportunities to interview other eyewitnesses.<sup>51</sup> However, this work will not explore the particulars of these sources, because the source question distracts from its overriding purpose,<sup>52</sup> and because scholars cannot agree on specific sources.<sup>53</sup>

Similarly, it can be assumed that Luke acts as a redactor of the sources he draws from; this can be seen in his treatment of the Markan material in his Gospel.<sup>54</sup> He has collected, arranged, edited, and modified his sources to suit his needs and agendas, and to bring them into a form suitable for his audience, and he adds summaries and commentaries from time to time. The problem is isolating the sources, and discovering where Luke's voice starts and stops. This renders the distinguishing of tradition from redaction subjective and problematic.

Redaction criticism will instead be employed in a more general way, assuming that Luke is not just the 'editor' of his material, but that he is the author of his work, and therefore

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<sup>47</sup> Barrett claims that, 'the attempt to reconstruct the original text, or perhaps one ought to say the original texts, of Acts is perhaps the most difficult of all textual problems in the NT', *Acts*, 1.2. The problem of a Western text is not confined to Acts, but appears, though less acutely, throughout the NT.

<sup>48</sup> M. C. Parsons, M. M. Culy, *Acts: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2003), provides verse by verse textual, philological, and grammatical keys to interpreting the text of Acts.

<sup>49</sup> The Alexandrian text is generally accepted because it is shorter than the Western text, and the longer text is usually derived from the shorter by adding explanatory gloss and explanation, and because the Western text has a secondary, periphrastic appearance. Barrett, *Acts*, 1.28; Hemer, *Acts*, 55.

<sup>50</sup> See, footnote 18 above; also Witherington, *Acts*, 169-70, for a hypothesis on possible sources for Acts.

<sup>51</sup> This is likely why the details of chs. 13-28 are most vivid. Cf. Hemer, *Acts*, 101-220; Dunn, *Acts*, xvi.

<sup>52</sup> The same can be said for form criticism. Though it is likely that some of Luke's sources may have originated as oral tradition, this work is not interested in these details.

<sup>53</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 3: 'Luke rewrites his sources thoroughly. If we did not have an extant version of Mark, we would never be able to detract with certainty where Luke was using him as a source [in the Gospel]. Since in the case of Acts we have no standard of comparison, the detection of specific sources is even more hopeless.'

<sup>54</sup> See N. Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?* (London: SPCK, 1970). NT source and redaction criticism work best in analyzing the synoptic Gospels, and are much more speculative when it comes to Acts.

it is all redaction, all his voice and his theology.<sup>55</sup> Luke's theological and apologetic motivations are the focus – what he understands to be central about the mission of the early church. In doing this, a final form reading of Acts will be pursued, and the complex debates over the source, origin and authenticity of various texts in Acts will be bypassed.

### 2.2.3.1 'Semantic Analysis' of the Text

Luke is a careful and purposeful writer, who never accidentally includes or omits anything; every word of Acts has some narrative function.<sup>56</sup> This justifies a semantic analysis of the text of Acts, for the words Luke uses illuminate the meanings he intends to convey. A detailed semantic/linguistic analysis of the final form of Acts is the fundamental approach of this work. If every word Luke uses is purposeful, it is essential to pay close attention to his word choices, and to the way that he arranges words together. There are multiple words in the text which are hermeneutical clues to Luke's intended meaning. This semantic analysis of the Acts narrative will focus on the linguistic choices that Luke makes in Acts.

### 2.2.4 Narrative Criticism

In addition to being a historian and theologian, Luke is also a masterful storyteller. Because he composes his histories in vivid narrative form, narrative criticism is essential to understand and appreciate his writing.<sup>57</sup> Narrative analysis reveals the way Luke uses stories to interpret his world, and to instruct his readers, focusing on what these stories are meant to teach, not whether they are 'true' or 'factual'.<sup>58</sup> This examination will treat the text of Acts as a unit, and focus at times on the narrative structure and composition, the plot development, the themes and motifs, and the characterization within the Acts narrative.

Narrative criticism helps to uncover authorial intent and discern what Luke intended to say and teach, and how his original audience would have understood and responded to

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<sup>55</sup> Luke is clearly writing *his* history of the early church, from *his* perspective, to *his* audience.

<sup>56</sup> Marguerat makes this assumption throughout *Historian*. Cf. 179-204.

<sup>57</sup> See Marguerat, *Historian*, for an example of a thorough narrative analysis of Acts.

<sup>58</sup> This is not to say that the content of Acts is not true or historical, but rather that this is a separate question.

him. This leads into reader response criticism, which is a focus on the way the reader or audience experiences the meaning of a literary work.<sup>59</sup> Every person's unique worldview, experiences and personal context will cause them to respond to the same text in different ways. This work is interested in how Luke's intended first audience, living two to three generations after the characters in Acts, would have responded to the text. Luke has a reader response in mind as he writes his narrative, focused on drawing his audience into mission, and this rhetorical purpose will be highlighted throughout this work.

Reception theory focuses on the reader's reception of a literary text, and reception history is the history of this reception, tracing ways audiences have interpreted the text, and made it meaningful for their present lives.<sup>60</sup> This discipline emphasizes that the extent of a reader's shared cultural background with the author has a direct correlation on their ability to recognize the authorial intent. Though this is not a primary interest in this work, it is a way of discussing the relevant question of the meaning(s) of Acts to readers over time.<sup>61</sup>

### 2.2.5 Social-Scientific Criticism

Multi-discipline methodologies drawing from the disciplines of the social sciences have influenced the way Acts is understood.<sup>62</sup> They elucidate the social world *behind* the text, rather than simply the historical world *in* the text. Acts is not only a historical phenomenon,

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<sup>59</sup> See J. P. Tompkins, ed., *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1980); E. Freund, *The Return of the Reader: Reader-Response Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1987). For reader oriented criticism in Biblical Studies, see E. V. McKnight, *Postmodern Use of the Bible: The Emergence of Reader-Oriented Criticism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988); I. R. Kitzberger, ed., *The Personal Voice in Biblical Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>60</sup> See R. C. Holub, *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction* (London: Methuen, 1984).

<sup>61</sup> For application to the NT, see M. Müller, H. Tronier, eds., *The New Testament as Reception*, JSNT.SS 230 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002). For a recent treatment of the early reception of Luke-Acts, see A. F. Gregory, *The Reception of Luke and Acts in the Period Before Irenaeus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

<sup>62</sup> 'Social-scientific criticism of the Bible is that phase of the exegetical task which analyzes the social and cultural dimensions of the text and of its environmental context through the utilization of the perspectives, theory, models, and research of the social-sciences', J. Elliot, *What is Social-Scientific Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993): 7. Cf. P. F. Esler, *The First Christians in Their Social Worlds* (London: Routledge, 1994); D. G. Horrell, ed., *Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999).

but it is also a cultural phenomenon, containing many social references and issues.<sup>63</sup> Thus social-scientific criticism is required to adequately understand it.<sup>64</sup>

### 2.3. *Hermeneutical Approaches to Acts*

Acts is a long, multi-layered narrative, and balanced interpretation is a complex process. How does one understand what was important to Luke, and grasp the things which he is meaning to emphasize, particularly in the area of Christian mission? Luke gives multiple clues to interpretation throughout Acts, which are helpful hermeneutical keys.

#### 2.3.1 *Narrative Redundancy*

One of the trademarks of Acts is the way that Luke repeats certain stories, such as Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 9, 22, 26). Marguerat examines this instance of narrative redundancy, and concludes that Luke sees Saul's conversion as a hermeneutical key to the expansion of the church outside of the bounds of Judaism.<sup>65</sup> The story of the Gentile expansion is book-ended by the conversion accounts in Acts 9 and Acts 22, and then reinterpreted theologically in Acts 26.<sup>66</sup> Ultimately, 'the Damascus road event allows the author of Acts to unfold the theological theme that he cherishes above all else: this theme is *the power of the Risen One as a transforming force within history.*'<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Acts is full of references to social relations (Jews/Greeks, slave/free, etc.), social groups and organizations (Pharisees, the Council, the apostles, etc.), social institutions and events (proconsuls, Kings, census, sacrificial systems, etc.), and patterns and codes of social behavior (purity codes, patterns of familial relations, household rules, etc.). It is a thoroughly social document.

<sup>64</sup> S.C. Barton, 'Historical Criticism and Social-Scientific Perspectives in New Testament Study', *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, J.B. Green, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995): 61-89, citing 67-68. This will not be our primary approach, but only employed when it is relevant to our research questions. E.g., the role of social networks in the missional spread of the church in Acts will be examined in part 4, on missional strategy in Acts. See R. Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997): 61-71, 91-94, and *Cities of God* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006): 8-15, for examples of the application of social network methodology. Similarly, rational choice theory will be utilized briefly in part 2, on missional stimulus in Acts.

<sup>65</sup> Marguerat, *Historian*, 203-204. Haenchen emphasizes this: 'Why did Luke recount Paul's conversion three times? Luke employs such repetitions only when he considers something to be extraordinarily important and wishes to impress it unforgettably on the reader. That is the case here,' *Acts*, 327.

<sup>66</sup> Marguerat sees each of these recountings having a different narrative purpose, embodied by a specific theological theme. Acts 9 is about ecclesial mediation, and the reversal of Saul's identity. Acts 22 is an affirmation of Paul's Jewishness, emphasized as he stands before a hostile Jewish crowd. Acts 26 emphasizes the power of the Risen One, as an irresistible force that changes history. *Historian*, 191-203.

<sup>67</sup> Marguerat, *Historian*, 204. Behind the repeated conversion narratives is an example of Luke's skillful use of *prosopopoeia*. This is an exercise among the rhetorical schools of antiquity which involved recomposing a story from one character's particular point of view, and adapting it to a specific audience. W. S. Kurz, 'Hellenistic



The other repeated stories in Acts are also hermeneutical keys to the larger story. The Cornelius episode is repeated to underscore God's acceptance of and mission to the Gentiles (Acts 10, 11). The repetition of the Jerusalem Council's decision illustrates the watershed moment when the church recognizes the significance of God's acceptance of Gentiles, its implications for the church and mission, and agrees on what to do about it (Acts 15.19-20,28-29). This strengthens Marguerat's argument that every detail has purpose in Acts, even the seeming inconsistencies in particular stories; Luke includes nothing in Acts by accident.

### 2.3.2 Linguistic Repetition

When Luke employs narrative redundancy, he is hinting at the hermeneutical significance of that particular narrative scene. The same is true of linguistic repetition. This work will examine repeated words and concepts, because their repetition points towards their importance within Luke's overall narrative. For example, words like *πνεῦμα* (70 occurrences), *λόγος* (65 occurrences), *οἶκος* (25 occurrences), *ἐκκλησία* (23 occurrences), and *σημεῖον* (13 occurrences) must be taken seriously, because they occur with such frequency.<sup>68</sup> Each of these concepts helps the reader understand what Luke is meaning to teach in Acts.

### 2.3.3 Patterns

Observing patterns in the text is a helpful hermeneutical method, particularly when there is only one pattern. For example, Acts consistently suggests that everyone must repent and believe the gospel, regardless of background or religious affiliation.<sup>69</sup> Though it is expressed in different ways, this same message is found throughout the book; for Luke there is only one way to be saved, and that is through repentance and believing in Christ (Acts 4.12).

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Rhetoric in the Christological Proof of Luke-Acts,' *CBQ* 42 (1980): 171-95, citing 186; D. E. Aune, *New Testament*, 125-28; Marguerat, *Historian*, 17-19. Quintilian recommends this exercise because 'it is highly profitable for poets and future historians', *Institutio Oratoria*, 3.8.49.

<sup>68</sup> The same is true for the missional words identified in the next chapter, such as *εὐαγγελίζομαι* (15 occurrences), *μάρτυς* (13), *καταγγέλλω* (10), *διδάσκω* (16) and *κηρύσσω* (8), among others.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. e.g., Acts 2.37-42 to 19.1-7. See also 3.19; 5.31; 8.22; 11.18; 17.30; 20.21; 26.20.

Another example of the use of patterns is the way that baptism and the filling of the Holy Spirit are presented in Acts. Multiple patterns can be observed surrounding the much-debated question of the chronological and theological relationship between receiving the Spirit and water baptism.<sup>70</sup> 'Luke...has rightly suggested that history is messy and things do not always happen in the order one might expect or desire. In other words, there is no *one* pattern being suggested in Acts, though receiving the Spirit then water seems to be the most common order.'<sup>71</sup> One can argue that Luke is not suggesting a particular order of events in relation to baptism in water and the Spirit, and/or that Luke means to teach that God can send the Spirit at whatever point he wants to, and in whatever way he wants to.

A similar argument can be made for the 'manifestations' of the Spirit in Acts. There is no clear pattern here either, for different things accompany the coming of the Spirit at different times: joy (13.52), boldness (4.31), tongues (2.4,11; 10.46; 19.6), prophecy (19.6), healings (4.30; 10.38). In Acts, Luke is claiming that the Spirit is free to come whenever he wants, and do whatever he wants, and Luke emphasizes this by modifying the patterns.

#### *2.3.4 Divine Approval or Disapproval*

Another interpretive key in Acts is when God approves or disapproves of something. For example, divine disapproval towards Ananias and Sapphira and their sin is obvious (5.1-11). It is still most advisable to look for patterns and repetition such as the repeated recounting of the story of Saul's conversion (Acts 9, 22, 26). In each of these God dramatically stops Saul, preventing him from persecuting Christians. One may conclude normatively that God never

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<sup>70</sup> Water precedes the reception of the Spirit (Acts 8.4-25); the Spirit is received prior to water (9.17-18; 10.44-48); water and Spirit seem to be received simultaneously (8.26-40); persons full of the Spirit know little or nothing about Christian water baptism (Apollos, 18.24-28); 'disciples' have been baptized in water but have never heard that there is a Holy Spirit (19.1-3). All of these passages require careful interpretation – the emphasis here is on chronological order and patterns.

<sup>71</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 101. Luke believes that *withholding* water baptism once one has received the Spirit is inappropriate, cf. Cornelius (Acts 10.44-48).

approves of the persecution of Christians. Conversely, God grants favour to the early church just after Pentecost, showing that he is pleased with what has happened (Acts 2.47).<sup>72</sup>

### 2.3.5 Characterization

Luke uses the literary device of characterization frequently, and intends for his audience to follow in the footsteps of many of the characters in his narrative.<sup>73</sup> Luke holds up people such as Paul, Peter, James, Stephen, Philip, Barnabas, Apollos, Mary, Tabitha, Lydia, Priscilla and Aquila as role-models worth emulating, at least in terms of their words and deeds.<sup>74</sup> There are also Christians whom Luke does not see as exemplary, such as John Mark (Acts 13.13; 15.36-40) or Ananias and Sapphira (5.1-11.).<sup>75</sup> Luke also presents local churches such as Jerusalem, Antioch, and Ephesus as models for congregations to follow.

### 2.3.6 The Jerusalem Church – A Hermeneutical Key for Christian Behaviour

The Jerusalem summary passages (Acts 2.42-47 and 4.32-37) set out Luke's ideals for Christian behaviour and practice within the local church.<sup>76</sup> These passages emphasize eight behavioural standards of the early Jerusalem community:

- 1) *Fellowship* (κοινωνία, 2.42);
- 2) *Prayer* (προσευχή, 2.42);
- 3) *Eating together and/or communion* (τῆ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου, 2.42,46);
- 4) *Signs and wonders* (τέρατα καὶ σημεῖα, 2.43; 4.33);
- 5) *Adhering to the apostles' teaching* (προσκαρτεροῦντες τῇ διδαχῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων, 2.42);
- 6) *Sharing possessions* (εἶχον ἅπαντα κοινά, καὶ τὰ κτήματα καὶ τὰς ὑπάρξεις ἐπίπρασκον καὶ διεμέριζον αὐτὰ πᾶσι καθότι ἂν τις χρεῖαν εἶχεν, 2.44,45; 4.32,34-35);
- 7) *Unity* (ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό, 2.44,46; ἓν καρδία καὶ ψυχὴ μία, 4.32);
- 8) *Evangelism* (ὁ δὲ κύριος προσετίθει τοὺς σωζομένους καθ' ἡμέραν, 2.47).

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<sup>72</sup> This favour is another motif in Acts: Moses (7.10), David (7.46), and the early church after Pentecost (2.47).

<sup>73</sup> See J. A. Darr, *On Character Building: The Reader and the Rhetoric of Characterization in Luke-Acts* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), and *Herod the Fox: Audience Criticism and Lukan Characterization*, JSNT.SS 163 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1988).

<sup>74</sup> As a historian, Luke is not interested in their private lives, but their public face is presented as an example.

<sup>75</sup> 'Even the Christian characters...have to be scrutinized on the basis of Christian standards or ideals listed in the text', Witherington, *Acts*, 99.

<sup>76</sup> 'These...boil down...some of the essential...characteristics of the Jerusalem church', Witherington, *Acts*, 99.

Many of these themes are repeated throughout the remainder of the narrative, and serve as a standard to evaluate subsequent characters in the book, such as Ananias and Sapphira (5.1-11), the distribution to the widows (6.1-6), or John Mark (13.13; 15.37-39). They are internal clues as to what Luke sees in the church as normative Christian behaviour.

Luke also presents the first church at Jerusalem as the ideal or prototype missionary church. The internal practices that he describes are ideally suited to the kind of missional advancement that he advocates throughout the remainder of Acts. Luke takes the most time to describe the inner-workings of this earliest Christian church, and sets the standard for what it means to be a local church that carries out its missionary mandate. One can suppose that many of the later churches shared some of these characteristics, and also that Luke is presenting the Jerusalem community as a model for local churches in his own day.

### *2.3.7 The Petrine and Pauline Speeches – A Hermeneutical Key for Christian Belief*

There are also clues about what Luke sees as normative Christian belief in Acts, found in the repeated themes in the speeches of Peter and Paul in Acts 2-20, who in Luke's eyes speak more clearly and authoritatively for early Christianity than anyone else.<sup>77</sup> Though Luke probably relies on sources, these speeches are widely seen as Lukan redactional creations, in which he conveys his understanding of the crucial themes of early Christian theology.<sup>78</sup>

When these speeches of Peter and Paul are analyzed, a number of normative theological themes emerge.<sup>79</sup> The most fundamental is *the narrative of Jesus' life, death, and*

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<sup>77</sup> Other speeches (Stephen, Acts 7; James, Acts 15; Paul's defense speeches, Acts 21-28) are situation specific. For detailed literary analysis of Peter's speeches, see H. F. Bayer, 'The Preaching of Peter in Acts', *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, I. H. Marshall, D. Peterson, eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998): 257-74; for Paul's speeches, see same volume, G. W. Hansen, 'The Preaching and Defence of Paul', 295-324.

<sup>78</sup> The speeches in Acts consume about 30% of the total length of Acts, are composed of at least 365 verses, and carry the heaviest weight of the book's theology. Speeches in ancient historiography tended to be products of the historian, yet there were strict conventions at play, which prohibited the author from freely creating speeches out of thin air. The speeches in Acts should be seen as Lukan in origin, and yet trustworthy in their basic content and format. See the example from Thuc., *Hist.*, 1.22.1, where he admits to not representing the speeches word for word, but strives to give the general import of what was said, in a way that would have been most likely, and proper to the occasion. The Acts speeches reveal what Luke thought to be most important about the belief of the early church. See Witherington, *History, Literature*, 23-32.

<sup>79</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 100.

*resurrection,*<sup>80</sup> and *the sending of the Spirit.*<sup>81</sup> Alongside these themes come the related ideas that *God is the universal God of all peoples,*<sup>82</sup> and that *he shows no partiality.*<sup>83</sup> Finally, there are the linked ideas that *God is an all-powerful and sovereign Creator who made everything,*<sup>84</sup> and *who will bring about a future judgment and resurrection.*<sup>85</sup>

The themes of God's all-encompassing plan of salvation and the coming of the kingdom through the ministry of Jesus and his followers tie these primary theological beliefs together.<sup>86</sup> Luke does not say much about ecclesiological matters in Acts, but consistently shows Christians witnessing to all persons, regardless of their ethnicity or background. For Luke the church is all those who respond positively to the gospel, whether they be Jew or Gentile, which suggests that all are lost and in need of the salvation that is to be found in Christ. These theological themes, found particularly in the Petrine and Pauline speeches of Acts 2-20, reveal what Luke understands normative Christian belief to be.

### *2.3.8 Miracles and the Supernatural*

Luke includes supernatural phenomena in Acts, which can be a stumbling-block to modern scholars. However, many first century people would have seen the miraculous as plausible, and this work will attempt to avoid reducing the story of Acts to an individual's limited and subjective experience, but to probe what Luke believed made the early church a dynamic missional movement. For Luke, miracles were a vital part of this mix, and were indelibly intertwined with the actual carrying out of the mission of the early church. The presence of a miracle in Acts is another way that Luke highlights a significant narrative detail or episode.

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<sup>80</sup> E.g., Acts 2.29-32; 3.13-15; 4.2; 5.30-31; 10.36-43; 13.33; 17.3,18,32; 18.5. This is the starting point for Luke; it makes everything else possible.

<sup>81</sup> E.g., Acts 2.17-33; 5.32; 11.15-17; 15.8. The activity and sending of the Holy Spirit is one of the chief themes of the narrative, both in the speeches and apart from them.

<sup>82</sup> E.g., Acts 2.17; 3.25; 4.10; 10.35; 17.31-31. Notice the repeated theme of 'all people' and 'every nation'. This highlights Luke's universal evangelistic theology (see ch. 6).

<sup>83</sup> E.g., Acts 10.34-35; 17.27-28. Everyone has equal access to this good news of God's Kingdom, manifested through Christ's death and resurrection, and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>84</sup> E.g., Acts 17.24-30; 4.24.

<sup>85</sup> E.g., Acts 17.31-32; 24.15,25; 4.2.

<sup>86</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 100.

## ***2.4 Conclusions***

This work will examine the text of Acts as it exists today. As a master story-teller, Luke is intentional about every detail that he includes. He is attempting to instruct his readers about the early church, and particularly about how early Christian mission happened; his goal is to provide a model for later churches to emulate. The contents of Acts will not be dismissed, whether that is in the realm of miracles, or other controversial historical questions. Instead, the final form of Acts will be interpreted according to the methodological and hermeneutical principles laid out in this chapter, keeping in mind these primary questions:

- What is Luke meaning to convey and teach, particularly about mission?
- How would the narrative have impacted his readers?

Because Acts is not a systematic teaching, arriving at accurate answers to these questions requires careful interpretive work. Luke instructs his readers through narrative, rather than methodically organized points. Yet the messages and meanings of Acts are not very subtle. Luke has arranged his material so that the careful reader can discern his intentions, and learn from his missional instruction.

## CHAPTER 3 – DEFINITION AND QUANTIFICATION OF MISSION

### 3.1 Defining Mission

Before examining mission in Acts, certain terms must be defined. Some scholars operate with a broad understanding of mission, which includes any activity that is in any way missional or related to ‘God’s mission’ (*missio Dei*).<sup>1</sup> While there is merit in this understanding, it is too general for the purposes of this work.

#### 3.1.1 A Working Definition

This study will follow the definition of mission proposed by E. J. Schnabel:

The term ‘mission’ or ‘missions’ refers to the activity of a *community of faith* that distinguishes itself from its environment in terms of both *religious belief* (theology) and *social behaviour* (ethics), that is *convinced of the truth claims of its faith*, and that *actively works* to win other people to the content of faith and the way of life of whose truth and necessity the members of that community are convinced.<sup>2</sup>

Four points can be drawn from this definition. First, biblical mission is inherently a community affair. While individuals may engage in missional activity, this is always within the context of a larger community, and the goal is either to draw new believers into that community, or to create a new missional community. Second, mission implies the belief and assertion of truth, and the rejection of relativism. To engage in mission, a person must be convinced of the truth of the message he or she is proclaiming. Third, biblical mission is always intentional, and requires active effort and concerted focus. Fourth, mission is about integrating belief and behaviour, and putting action to faith. Missional activity is the logical behavioural result of a missional belief system, the ethical outcome of biblical theology.

A fifth aspect of mission can be seen in the derivation of the word. The English word *mission* is derived from the Latin words *missio* (sending) and *mittere* (to send).<sup>3</sup> These words

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<sup>1</sup> E.g., Wright, *Mission of God*. In this all-encompassing sense, nearly everything in the NT is missional.

<sup>2</sup> Schnabel, *Mission*, 1.11. Cf. E. J. Sharpe, ‘Mission’, *A Dictionary of Comparative Religion*, S. G. F. Brandon, ed. (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1970): 444; M. Goodman, *Mission and Conversion*, 2-7.

<sup>3</sup> Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 22. This definition of mission will be fundamental to tracing and analyzing mission in Acts throughout the remainder of this work.

imply intentional geographical movement, from one point to another, and also the existence of a sender and a sent one (a messenger, ambassador, missionary).<sup>4</sup>

### 3.1.2 The New Testament Background

The fundamental expression of mission in scripture is Christ's incarnation (cf. Phil 2.5-11; Gal 4.4-5).<sup>5</sup> The community of the triune God (Jn 14.26; 15.26) sends Jesus to humankind (Jn 3.16-17; 6.38; 8.29; 12.49), with a message of absolute truth to proclaim (Jn 14.6), and an intentional mission to perform, which Jesus actively fulfils (Jn 1.1-14; 7.18).<sup>6</sup> Jesus expresses his missional self-understanding by quoting Isaiah: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because *he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour*' (Lk 4.18-19, quoting Isa 61.1-2).<sup>7</sup>

After being sent out from God, Jesus sends out his disciples in similar fashion: 'Peace by with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you' (Jn 12.49).<sup>8</sup> The earliest followers of Christ saw in his life a missional example to be followed, which was made explicit by his instructions to them at the end of his time with them (Mt 28.18-20; Mk 16.15-18; Lk 24.46-49; Jn 14.29; Acts 1.8). In these passages Jesus is urging his followers to become missionaries who follow his missional example.<sup>9</sup>

Though some presume that the words 'mission' and 'missionary' do not occur in the NT, this is incorrect. As has been seen, *mission* is derived from the Latin words *missio* (nom. of *missionem*) and *mittere*. The Greek verb that corresponds to *mittere* is ἀποστέλλω (to send

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<sup>4</sup> Mission does not necessarily imply cross-cultural travel, but it does require some sort of movement.

<sup>5</sup> Although there are many 'missionary texts' in the OT, which clearly influence the missional theology of the NT. The Hebrew Bible teaches that Yahweh alone is God, and there is no other (Deut 4.35,39), and he is God over the whole earth and all nations (Ps 24; 96; 1 Chr 29.11). Yahweh intends to bring blessing to the nations (Gen 12.3; 18.19; Deut 4.6-8; Jer 4.1-2). There is a universal outlook in some of the prophets (Amos 9.12; Isa 19.23-25; 49.6; 56.1-8; 60.1-3; 66.19-21; Zech. 2.1), and also in the Psalms (Ps 47; 87; 96).

<sup>6</sup> Notice that all aspects of mission that have been identified are present here.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Lk 4.43: 'I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; *for I was sent for this purpose.*' Purposeful intentionality and sending can be seen in Jesus' missional self-understanding.

<sup>8</sup> This theme of the sent ones, the disciples, can also be seen in Mt 9.38; 10.5,16; Mk 3.14; 6.7; Lk 9.2;10.1,2. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 23-26. Paul describes his own mission in similar terms (Gal 1.1,15-16).

<sup>9</sup> Many of the prophetic texts of the OT envisage this reality, which Christ fulfilled.



or dispatch someone, usually with a specific objective), and this word occurs 136 times in the NT.<sup>10</sup> The noun that corresponds to *missio* is ἀποστολή (a sending away, assignment, or the office of apostleship), and is used to describe Peter and Paul's missionary callings and ministries.<sup>11</sup> Finally, the related word ἀπόστολος (apostle), comes from this same root, and speaks of the missionary, the sent one, the messenger, and occurs 80 times in the NT.<sup>12</sup>

### 3.1.3 Missional Activities

This study understands 'mission', 'evangelism', and 'outreach' to be synonyms, implying the intentional endeavor to guide nonbelievers into faith in Christ. Defined this way, mission is an appropriate label for all of the evangelistic activity that happens in Acts.

Mission is understood as an umbrella category, under which all sorts of varied activities take place. Similarly, missional is an adjective which denotes this realm of outreach activity, and a missionary is someone who is engaged in active mission, and not necessarily a 'professional' or 'full-time' practitioner.<sup>13</sup> Schnabel gives a useful four-fold summary of a Christian missionary's general occupation: 'establish contact with non-Christians, proclaim the news of Jesus the Messiah and Saviour (proclamation, preaching, teaching, instruction [the εὐαγγέλιον]), lead people to faith in Jesus Christ (conversion, baptism), and integrate the new believers into the local community of the followers of Jesus (Lord's Supper, transformation of social and moral behavior, charity)'.<sup>14</sup>

Direct missional practice can be divided into three distinct sub-categories, each of which will be observed in the text of Acts:<sup>15</sup> 1) *Public mission proclamation*, usually through

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<sup>10</sup> This is used 97 times in the Gospels, both for Jesus having been 'sent' by God, and for the disciples being 'sent' out by Jesus. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 27-28.

<sup>11</sup> Rom 1.5: Paul's missionary calling; 1 Cor 9.2: Paul's missionary/apostolic work; Gal 2.8: Paul and Peter's missionary calling. Cf. Acts 1.25: the technical sense of the 'apostolic' office.

<sup>12</sup> The root of the English word apostle is missionary; as 'sent ones', the apostles were missionaries.

<sup>13</sup> These concepts are defined as simply as possible here. There is much more technical discussion in the literature, but this will suffice for the purposes of this work.

<sup>14</sup> Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 29. If there is no existing Christian community, a missionary will seek to establish a new church, into which the new converts can be integrated.

<sup>15</sup> Gehring, *House*, 91.

preaching or public debate; 2) *Person-to-person mission*, usually through personal conversation, relationship, and social networks; 3) *Lifestyle mission*, which involves living a transformed and loving life before others in the context of a larger Christian community, in a way that awakens interest in nonbelievers.<sup>16</sup>

### **3.2 Quantifying Mission in Acts**

Having defined 'mission', its volume and frequency in Acts can now be quantified. Reading through the text, one is naturally struck with the many missional episodes. But this is not enough. Nor is it enough to allow Luke to claim that Acts is a missional text.<sup>17</sup>

Two basic strategies will be employed. The first is a textual-linguistic approach, centered on various missional words that Luke uses, where they are, and how often they are used. The second is a narrative analysis, which examines the story of Acts for missional episodes and patterns, and analyzes this data. In employing both of these strategies, and integrating the results together, a more technical analysis of mission in Acts will be achieved.

#### **3.2.1 Linguistic Analysis – Missional Words in Acts**

The missionary activity of the early church is reflected in the actual words with which Luke describes the existence, self-understanding, and activity of the church in Acts. It seems that there are very few 'technical terms' for mission in Acts. Instead, Luke describes missionary action and activity in a semantically diverse and varied way. Each of these words is often a narrative cue that missional activity of some description is taking place. What follows is an attempt to categorize and analyze Luke's missional vocabulary in Acts. Certain word

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<sup>16</sup> While this lifestyle approach is less direct, it is an important aspect of the mission of the early church. Cf. Harnack, *Mission and Expansion*, who often emphasizes this third aspect of evangelism: "Missionary preaching" is a term which may be taken in a double sense. Its broader meaning covers all the forces of influence, attraction, and persuasion which the gospel had at its command', 1.86; 'It is impossible to see in any one class of people inside the Church chief agents of the Christian propaganda... we cannot hesitate to believe that the great mission of Christianity was in reality accomplished by means of informal missionaries', 1.368. 'The little man, the unknown ordinary man, the man who left no literary remains was the prime agent in mission', Green, *Evangelism*, 172.

<sup>17</sup> Acts 1.8 is the programmatic statement for the entire book.

groupings (grouped together either because of derivative or meaning) will be examined in some detail, and then the overall trends will be analyzed.

Διακονία is a generic word for ministry and service in the NT. However, there are three occurrences in Acts which are better translated as ‘mission’.<sup>18</sup> When Barnabas and Saul return to Antioch from Jerusalem, Luke says ‘they had fulfilled their *mission* (διακονίαν)’ (12.25). In Paul’s farewell speech to the Ephesian elders in Miletus, he emphasizes that his goal is, ‘that I may finish my course and the *mission* (διακονίαν) which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the good news of the grace of God’ (20.24). Similarly, when Paul returns to the Jerusalem elders, he relates to them ‘the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his *mission* (διακονίας)’ (21.19).<sup>19</sup> There are many other words in Acts which also carry a similar missional connotation.<sup>20</sup>

### 3.2.1.1 ‘Messengers’ – Evangelists and Proclaimers

The place to start is with the verb εὐαγγελίζομαι, which means to bring good news.<sup>21</sup> It is used often throughout the LXX, of any kind of good news.<sup>22</sup> It is also used frequently in this same general sense in other ancient Jewish literature,<sup>23</sup> and at times in ancient Greek and

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<sup>18</sup> Other uses of διακονία: Acts 1.17,25; 6.1 (the origin of deacon); 6.4 (this could be translated mission); 11.29.

<sup>19</sup> Though the specific content of διακονία varies slightly in Acts, it centres around testifying of the gospel.

<sup>20</sup> This is my list of missional words in Acts. Schnabel provides a table of missional words in the entire NT, broken into categories, *Mission*, Table 2.1, 1.36-37.

<sup>21</sup> Εὐαγγελίζομαι is derived from εὖ (good), and ἄγγελος (messenger, angel). Its common ancient usage shows that it meant to bring good news, or to be a messenger of good news, in the Greco-Roman world.

<sup>22</sup> BDAG, 402. The active form occurring in Acts 16.17 belongs to later Greek. There are 23 total occurrences of εὐαγγελίζομαι in the LXX, in 20 verses: 1 Kgdms [Sam] 31.9: ‘They cut off his head and stripped off his weapons, and sent them throughout the land of the Philistines, to carry the good news to the house of their idols and to the people’; 2 Kgdms 1.20; 4.10; 18.19: ‘Please let me run and bring the king news that the LORD has freed him from the hand of his enemies’; 18.20,26,31; 1 Kgs 1.42; 1 Chr 10.9; Ps 39.10; 67.12: ‘The women who proclaim the good tidings are a great host’; 95.2; PssSol 11.1; Joel 3.5; Nah 2.1; Isa 40.9: ‘Get yourself up on a high mountain, O Zion, bearer of good news, Lift up your voice mightily, O Jerusalem, bearer of good news’; 52.7: ‘How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who announces peace and brings good news of happiness, who announces salvation, and says to Zion, “Your God reigns!”’; 60.6: ‘They will bring gold and frankincense, and will bear good news of the praises of the LORD’; 61.1; Jer 20.15: ‘Cursed be the man who brought the news to my father, saying, “A baby boy has been born to you!”’

<sup>23</sup> Frequent in Josephus, e.g., *Ant.*, 7.250: ‘when the king inquired of him about the battle, he said he brought him the good news of victory and dominion’; 5.282: ‘he did not bring them the good news of the birth of a son out of the want of anything’; 15.209: ‘and told her, and her only, the good news’; 5.24: ‘told them these good tidings’; 18.228: ‘they rejoiced at the good news’; 6.56; *War*, 3.503: ‘let him know the good news of what he

Roman literature.<sup>24</sup> In the NT it is used specifically of the glad tidings of the coming kingdom of God, and of the salvation to be obtained in it through Christ.<sup>25</sup> Thus it has an evangelistic association in the NT, having to do with preaching the gospel, and is the root of the English word 'evangelize'. This explicitly missional understanding of the word is unique to the early Christian movement, though it has its roots in OT Messianic theology and the divine message of salvation.<sup>26</sup>

Εὐαγγελίζομαι occurs 15 times in Acts, and always implies the evangelistic preaching of the gospel.<sup>27</sup> The apostles preach in this way (including Paul and Barnabas), and Jesus himself preaches peace in 10.36.<sup>28</sup> However, Philip also preaches the good news of the kingdom of God (8.12,35,40), and in 8.4 it is very specifically not the apostles who preach.<sup>29</sup> This shows that Luke does not intend for εὐαγγελίζομαι to be an exclusively apostolic function. The specific content of the good news proclaimed varies slightly: Jesus (8.35), Jesus as the Christ (5.42), the Lord Jesus (11.20), Jesus and the resurrection (17.18), the word (8.4), the word of the Lord (15.35), the kingdom of God (8.4,12), peace (10.36), the promise God made to the fathers (13.32), a call to repentance (14.15), and often simply the good news (8.25,40; 14.7,21; 16.10). Collectively, these themes summarize the gospel message in Acts.

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had done'. Cf. also, Philo, *On Joseph*, 250: 'hastened to bring the *good news* (εὐηγγελίζοντο) to the king, and universal joy reigned everywhere'; PssSol 11.1: 'Cause to be heard in Jerusalem the voice of him *that brings good tidings*' (εὐαγγελίζομενου).

<sup>24</sup> E.g., Aristophanes, *Knights*, 643 (and elsewhere): 'I have got some *lovely news which first I bring to you*' [εὐαγγελισσασθαι]; Plut., *Mar.*, 22.4; Lucian, *Tyrannicide*, 9; Polyaeus, *Strategems*, 5.7; Dio Cassius, 61.13.4: 'conveyed to him *the good news* (as she assumed it to be) that she was safe.'

<sup>25</sup> Luke-Acts contains nearly half of the total NT occurrences of εὐαγγελίζομαι (25 out of 54). Paul uses it 21 times, Matthew once, Hebrews twice, Peter three times, and Revelation twice.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. e.g., Isa 60.6; Ps 67.12; PssSol 11.1. For later Christian usage, which is nearly all missional in nature, cf. 1 Cl. 42.3: '*they went forth with the glad tidings* (εὐαγγελίζω) that the kingdom of God should come'; and Eusebius, *HE*, 3.4.

<sup>27</sup> Acts 5.42; 8.4,12,25,35,40; 10.36; 11.20; 13.32; 14.7,15,21; 15.35; 16.10; 17.18.

<sup>28</sup> Almost identical language can be found in Eph 2.17: 'He [Christ] came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near.' Cf. Heb 3.1 for Jesus as an apostle.

<sup>29</sup> Those who had been scattered because of the persecution went about preaching the word, and 8.1 makes it clear that all *except* the apostles were scattered. Philip is one example of these non-apostolic preachers.

The neuter noun form is εὐαγγέλιον, which means a good message, or glad tidings.<sup>30</sup> This generic usage is common in ancient Greco-Roman literature,<sup>31</sup> and in Josephus,<sup>32</sup> though it only occurs once in the LXX.<sup>33</sup> In the NT εὐαγγέλιον is a very specific good message, the good news of the ‘gospel’, relating to God’s action in Jesus Christ. It is the evangelistic message which the early church proclaims. Though there are other sacral usages of εὐαγγέλιον in ancient literature,<sup>34</sup> the NT’s explicitly missional usage of it is unique. Εὐαγγέλιον occurs 76 times in 73 verses in the NT, but never in Luke’s Gospel, and only twice in Acts:<sup>35</sup> Peter proclaims the word of the gospel to the Gentiles (15.7),<sup>36</sup> and Paul testifies to the gospel of the grace of God (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς χάριτος τοῦ Θεοῦ, 20.24).<sup>37</sup>

Scholars have argued that εὐαγγέλιον is a word used in the NT in opposition and subversion to the dominant Emperor cult, and specifically the divinity and rule of Caesar.<sup>38</sup>

N. T. Wright, one of the prominent exponents of this view, explains the Imperial background:

<sup>30</sup> It originally was ‘a reward for good news’, but then became ‘good news’. *BDAG*, 402.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. e.g., Plut., *Sertorius*, 11.4: ‘Wearing garlands for the receipt of *glad tidings*’ (εὐαγγέλιος); 26.3: ‘Sertorius was overjoyed and offered a sacrifice of *glad tidings*’ (εὐαγγελία); Appian, *Civil Wars*, 4.113: ‘as some horsemen were approaching, bringing the *good news* from Brutus’; 4.20: ‘Then some of the soldiers hastened on horseback and others on shipboard to convey the *good news* quickly to Antony.’

<sup>32</sup> Cf. e.g., Josephus, *War*, 2.420: ‘Now this terrible message was *good news* to Florus’; 4.618: ‘every city kept festivals, and celebrated sacrifices and oblations for such *good news*’; 4.656: ‘as Vespasian was come to Alexandria, this *good news* came from Rome...’

<sup>33</sup> 2 Sam 4.10: ‘when one told me, saying, “Behold, Saul is dead,” and thought he was *bringing good news* (εὐαγγελιζόμενος), I seized him and killed him in Ziklag, which was the reward I gave him for his *news*’ (εὐαγγέλια).’ The usage of εὐαγγέλιον seems to be largely a later development, unlike the verbal form (above).

<sup>34</sup> Diodorus Siculus, 15.74.2: ‘Dionysius offered a sacrifice for *good news* to the gods’ (τοῖς θεοῖς εὐαγγέλια θυσίας); Philostratus, *Life*, 1.28: ‘They accordingly ran into the palace and told everybody the *good news* [of the appearing of Apollon]; Aelius Aristides, *Orations*, 53.3: ‘Ζεὺς Εὐαγγέλιος’.

<sup>35</sup> All but 16 of the 76 occurrences are in Paul; it is a favorite Pauline expression.

<sup>36</sup> This phrase is emphatic, as Peter claims his special status as the one through which ‘the word of the Gospel’ (τὸν λόγον τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, a unique phrase in the NT, though cf. Col 1.5) was first communicated to the Gentiles, at the Jerusalem Council. Ironically, Peter is never seen in Acts again. Barrett, *Acts*, 1.715.

<sup>37</sup> This is an important statement for Luke; Paul’s basic goal and mission is to complete the ministry (διακονία, see above) which he received from the Lord, which is to testify of the *gospel* of God’s grace. Cf. 14.3; 20.32.

<sup>38</sup> J. D. Crossan, J. L. Reed, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus’ Apostle Opposed Rome’s Empire with God’s Kingdom* (New York: HarperOne, 2005): 161-172, 270-277, 412-413. *JSNT* 27.3 (2005): 251-376 deals with the NT and the Imperial Cult, including: J. S. McLaren, ‘Jews and the Imperial Cult: From Augustus to Domitian’, 257-78; C. K. Rowe, ‘Luke-Acts and the Imperial Cult: A Way Through the Conundrum’, 279-300; P. Oakes, ‘Re-mapping the Universe: Paul and the Emperor in 1 Thessalonians and Philippians’, 301-22; H. O. Maier, ‘A Sly Civility: Colossians and Empire’, 323-49; S. J. Friesen, ‘Satan’s Throne, Imperial Cults and the Social Setting of Revelation’, 351-73. A significant proponent of Pauline ‘coded references’ to the Empire is N. T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009): 5ff., 59-81: ‘There are indeed echoes, and more than just echoes, of the rhetoric of imperial Rome in the writings of Paul’, 77.

'Freedom, justice, peace and salvation were the imperial themes that you would expect to meet in the mass media of the ancient world, that is, on statues, on coins, in poetry and song and speeches. And the announcement of these themes, focused of course on the person of the emperor who accomplished and guaranteed them, could be spoken of as *euangelion*, "good news", "gospel".'<sup>39</sup> Crossan cites two ancient inscriptions which emphasize this.<sup>40</sup>

Εὐαγγέλιον, κύριος, εἰρήνη, σωτηρία, and other similar NT words were associated with the Emperor, and N. T. Wright explains their NT use this way:

Since the word 'gospel' [εὐαγγέλιον] was in public use to designate the message that Caesar was the Lord of the whole world, Paul's message could not escape being confrontative: Jesus, not Caesar, is Lord, and at his name, not that of the Emperor, every knee shall bow. This aspect lies at the heart of what I have called 'the fresh perspective on Paul', the discovery of a subversive political dimension not as an add-on to Paul's theology but as part of the inner meaning of 'gospel', 'righteousness', and so on.<sup>41</sup>

This assertion has provoked much contention, culminating in a memorable debate between Wright and J. Barclay at the 2007 SBL.<sup>42</sup>

Luke's rare use of εὐαγγέλιον leads to the conclusion that Luke does not use it with this subversive connotation.<sup>43</sup> He possibly uses κύριος seditiously in 10.36, referring to Christ

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<sup>39</sup> Wright, *Paul*, 61. Wright also stresses the double meaning of εὐαγγέλιον, esp. in Rom 1.16: 'the "gospel", a word which, as is now more widely recognized, contains the inescapable overtones *both* of the message announced by Isaiah's herald, the message of return from exile and the return of YHWH to Zion, *and* of the "good news" heralded around the Roman world every time the anniversary of the emperor's accession, or his birthday, came round again. Paul comes to Rome, "not ashamed of this gospel", as he says in 1.16, because – and here, clearly, every phrase counts – the gospel is God's *power* (that word again) to *salvation* (that word again) to all who *believe*, in other words, all those who are faithful and loyal; because in it, God's *diaiosyne*, God's *iustitia*, God's saving covenant-based justice, is unveiled for all, the Jew first and also the Greek. Through the gospel, in other words, the one true God is claiming the allegiance of the entire world, since the gospel itself carries the same power which raised Jesus from the dead, unveiling the true salvation and the true justice before a world where those were already key imperial buzzwords', 70.

<sup>40</sup> 'The divine Augustus was... Lord of history, therefore, since there never was before nor ever would be again good news or gospel (plural *euaggelia*) surpassing that which announced his birth. In every city of rich Roman Asia there was decreed, for all time past, present, and future, but one overwhelming gospel, the good news of Augustus's advent, epiphany, and presence, the good news of a global Lord, divine Son, and cosmic Savior', Crossan & Reed, *In Search of Paul*, 239, 241.

<sup>41</sup> N. T. Wright, 'New Perspectives on Paul', delivered at 10th Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference: 25–28 August 2003, [http://www.ntwrightpage.com/Wright\\_New\\_Perspectives.htm](http://www.ntwrightpage.com/Wright_New_Perspectives.htm), 20 May 2010.

<sup>42</sup> For a recording of this debate, [www.andyrowell.net/andy\\_rowell/2007/11/audio-from-a-fe.html](http://www.andyrowell.net/andy_rowell/2007/11/audio-from-a-fe.html), 9 June 2010. Barclay persuasively claims that Wright must have been 'hallucinating' to see coded reference to the Emperor Cult in Paul's writings. According to Barclay, Paul's truly subversive move is in ignoring the empire and the imperial cult, because Christ's death and resurrection has brought about a wholly new reality.

<sup>43</sup> Acts 15.7 and 20.24 (see above) could be understood as anti-Imperial, but if this was a significant concern for Luke, he surely would have used the word more frequently (as Paul does). In Acts, the Lukan Paul goes to great lengths to claim he has nothing against Caesar: 25.8-12,21; 26.32; 27.24; 28.18-19.

as ‘Lord of all’ (οὐτός ἐστι πάντων Κύριος),<sup>44</sup> and 17.7 may be anti-Imperial in some way: Paul and his associates are accused of acting, ‘contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus’ (βασιλέα ἕτερον λέγοντες εἶναι, Ἰησοῦν).<sup>45</sup> Luke is clearly aware of this contentious issue, but opposing the emperor cult is not one of his major concerns.<sup>46</sup>

The related masculine noun εὐαγγελιστής, which is the proclaimer of the message, or the evangelist, is only found once in Acts: Luke calls Philip a εὐαγγελιστής in 21.8.<sup>47</sup> This title distinguishes this Philip from the Apostle Philip (1.13), and therefore from the Apostles, and also from the Twelve. The word εὐαγγελιστής was rarely used in early Christianity,<sup>48</sup> and when it was, it was applicable to those who assisted and followed the apostles in the work of mission preaching and founding churches,<sup>49</sup> and later more widely, after the word ἀπόστολος had been confined to the Twelve.<sup>50</sup> It has virtually no usage in ancient literature.<sup>51</sup>

Καταγγέλλω shares ἄγγελος (messenger, angel) with εὐαγγελίζω, but adds the preposition κατά (according to, among, throughout, denoting distribution). The meaning is similar to εὐαγγελίζω, but has a more public connotation, implying broad dissemination of the message proclaimed.<sup>52</sup> It was a somewhat common word in the ancient world, generally

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. Rowe, ‘Luke-Acts and the Imperial Cult’, 279-300, which catalogues the problems associated with this in Luke-Acts, provides an exegesis of Acts 10.36-37, and deals with ancient references relevant to this question.

<sup>45</sup> Wright, *Paul*, 70. Luke does not confirm or deny this accusation in the text.

<sup>46</sup> This sheds light on Luke’s socio-historical setting. Paul is more aware of the emperor cult than Luke, and the writer of Revelation is clearly subversive – Friesen, ‘Satan’s Throne’, 351-73. Luke wrote between the two, in a time when Imperial persecution was probably less widespread, and so did not address it as directly or overtly.

<sup>47</sup> This seems to be a functionary designation for non-apostles, whose primary work is evangelism. It only occurs two other times in the NT: Paul includes it in his five-fold list of spiritual offices/gifts (εὐαγγελιστάς, Eph 4.11), and then exhorts Timothy to do the work of an evangelist, and thus fulfill his ministry (2 Tim 4.5). In Acts Luke presents Philip as an outstanding example of an evangelist (21.8; 8.12,35,40).

<sup>48</sup> Harnack, *Mission and Expansion*, 1.321 (footnote 4), 348-52.

<sup>49</sup> According to Eusebius, *HE*, 3.37.2: ‘Most of the disciples of that time, animated by the divine word... had already fulfilled the command of the Saviour, and had distributed their goods to the needy. Then starting out upon long journeys they performed the office of evangelists, being filled with the desire to preach Christ to those who had not yet heard the word of faith, and to deliver to them the divine gospels.’ Cf. also, 3.37.4.

<sup>50</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, 2.993. At this point, it was likely more a function than a formal order or office.

<sup>51</sup> There is minimal ancient inscriptional evidence: εὐαγγελιστής is the title of polytheistic priests in an ancient inscription, A. Böckh, et al, eds., *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum* (Berolini: Officina Academica, 1828-77): XII.1.675; εὐαγγελίς is the official title of the priestess of Hera, H. Collitz, O. Hoffman, eds., *Sammlung der griechischen Dialekt-Inschriften* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1884-1915): 5702.22,37. *BDAG*, 403.

<sup>52</sup> *BDAG*, 515.

used of public decrees and proclamations.<sup>53</sup> None of these are missional in nature, although 2 Mac 9.17 is more evangelistic, and therefore similar to later Christian usage: ‘he would become a Jew himself and *visit every inhabited place to proclaim there the power of God.*’<sup>54</sup>

*Καταγγέλλω* occurs 18 times in the NT, 11 of which are in Acts.<sup>55</sup> The apostles proclaim the resurrection from the dead (4.2). Paul and Barnabas proclaim the word of God in the synagogues in Salamis (13.5), forgiveness of sins to the people at Pisidian Antioch (13.38), and the word of the Lord in every city (15.36). Paul proclaims the way of salvation in Philippi (16.17), is accused of proclaiming unlawful customs (16.21), proclaims Jesus the Christ in Thessalonica (17.3), proclaims the word of God in Berea (17.13), and proclaims the truth of the unknown God to the Athenians (17.23). Finally, Jesus proclaims light to Jews and Gentiles through his resurrection from the dead (26.23). All of these are to larger audiences or areas, and reinforce the public and widespread nature of *καταγγέλλω* in Acts.<sup>56</sup>

Related to *καταγγέλλω* is the masculine noun *καταγγελεύς*, which is a proclaimer, one who sets something forth publicly.<sup>57</sup> The only occurrence of *καταγγελεύς* in the NT is Acts 17.18, when the Athenian philosophers accuse Paul of being a ‘*proclaimer* of strange/foreign deities’ (*ξένων δαιμονίων δοκεῖ καταγγελεύς*), because Paul was preaching Jesus to them. These words are basically synonyms in Acts, although *καταγγέλλω* and *καταγγελεύς* are more widespread in their influence than *εὐαγγελίζω*, *εὐαγγέλιον* and *εὐαγγελιστής*, and are

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<sup>53</sup> Cf. Josephus, *Ant.*, 3.206: ‘shall *inform* men in what cases Moses bid us offer a whole burnt-offering’; 2.15: ‘it *declared* the future happiness of his son’; Philo, *On the Creation*, 106. It was also used of the public herald at the ancient games, Barrett, *Acts*, 2.830.

<sup>54</sup> This is an important theological precursor to the early Christian understanding of *καταγγέλλω*. Cf. 2 Mac 8.36: ‘the people of Jerusalem *testified* that the Jews had a champion, and that they were invulnerable for the very reason that they followed the laws laid down by him.’ These are the only two occurrences in the LXX.

<sup>55</sup> The rest are in Paul: cf. Rom 1.8: ‘your faith is being *proclaimed* throughout the entire world’ – note the broad dissemination of the message; 1 Cor 2.1; 9.14; 11.26; Phil 1.17-18; Col 1.28. Paul’s understanding of this word, denoting widespread evangelism, likely influenced Luke’s theology and usage, even if indirectly.

<sup>56</sup> The 11<sup>th</sup> occurrence is Acts 3.24, where the prophets have *announced* ‘these days’ to the people. While this is not directly evangelistic in nature, it does illustrate the open and public nature of *καταγγέλλω*.

<sup>57</sup> This usage is rare: ‘*proclaimer* (*καταγγελεύς*) of the games’, W. Dittenberger, ed., *Orientalis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae* (1903-1905), 456.10 [1 BCE]; Böckh, *Inscriptionum*, XII.8.190.39ff. [1 CE].



reserved only for the apostles, and particularly for Paul.<sup>58</sup> For this reason, it is best to translate εὐαγγελίζω as preaching or evangelizing, and καταγγέλλω as proclaiming.

### 3.2.1.2 'Heralds'

Κηρύσσω is another missional word in Acts. It has a similar meaning to εὐαγγελίζω and καταγγέλλω, though with a slightly different nuance, meaning to herald, or make an official public announcement or declaration, often proclaimed by a king or a spiritual leader.<sup>59</sup> It is fairly frequent in ancient literature,<sup>60</sup> and in Josephus,<sup>61</sup> and occurs 31 times in the LXX, generally with this same meaning.<sup>62</sup> However, there are a few LXX examples in which κηρύσσω has a definite missionary nuance to it, particularly in God's missionary call to Jonah and Isa 61.1, which undoubtedly contributed to its NT missional connotations.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Each refers to Paul except one to 'the apostles', and one to Jesus. Paul is the chief proclaimer of the gospel.

<sup>59</sup> BDAG, 543.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. e.g., Xen., *Cyr.*, 8.4.4: 'where people feel that the one who merits most will neither have his praise proclaimed nor receive a prize, there is no emulation among them'; Polyb., *Hist.*, 30.29.6: 'And as for the hissing and hooting at public festivals when anyone attempted to proclaim one of these men as victor, it would not be easy to describe it'; *Hermetic Writings*, 1.27: 'I began to preach unto men the beauty of Devotion and of Gnosis'; 4.4: 'joining a Herald, to whom He gave command to make this proclamation to the hearts of men.' The *Hermetic Writings* are later 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century mostly Greek texts, which significantly reflect the more missional usage of κηρύσσω familiar to early Christians.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Josephus, *Ant.*, 10.117: 'And though the prophet Jeremiah was in prison, he did not rest, but cried out, and proclaimed aloud'; 9.214: 'It is also reported that Jonah was swallowed down by a whale...and went to the city Nineveh, where he stood so as to be heard, and preached' (for more on the missional aspects of κηρύσσω in Jonah see below); *War*, 6.285: 'A false prophet was the occasion of these people's destruction, who had made a public proclamation in the city...'

<sup>62</sup> It has a fairly broad distribution, although 2 Chr, 1 Mac, Joel, and Jonah are esp. fond of it: Gen 41.43: 'He had him ride in his second chariot; and they proclaimed before him, "Bow the knee!"'; Ex 32.5; 36.6: 'So Moses issued a command, and a proclamation was circulated throughout the camp...'; 2 King 10.20; 2 Chr 20.3; 24.9; 36.22: 'the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout his kingdom'; 1 Esdr 2.1; Esth 6.9,11; 1 Mac 5.49; 10.63: 'The king also had him seated at his side... "make a proclamation that no one is to bring charges against him on any grounds..."'; 10.64; Prov 1.21; 8.1: 'Does not wisdom call, and understanding lift up her voice?'; PssSol 11.1; Hos 5.8; Mic 3.5; Joel 1.14; 2.1,15: 'Blow a trumpet in Zion, Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly'; 4.9; Jonah 1.2; 3.2,4,5,7; Zeph 3.14: 'Shout for joy, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O Israel'; Zech. 9.9; Isa 61.1; Dan 3.4.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. esp. God's missionary call to Jonah (1.2; 3.2,4), and the peoples' responses (3.5,7), which illustrate the other meanings of the word: 'Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it (κήρυξον ἐν αὐτῇ), for their wickedness has come up before Me... Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation (κήρυξον ἐν αὐτῇ κατὰ τὸ κήρυγμα) which I am going to tell you... and he cried out (ἐκήρυξεν)... Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast (ἐκήρυξαν νηστείαν)... He [the King] issued a proclamation (ἐκηρύχθη)...' Cf. also, Isa 61.1, which Jesus reads, Lk 4.18: 'The LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim (κηρύξαι) liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners...', and though it is in the context of worshipping idols, Dan 3.4: 'Then the herald loudly proclaimed (κήρυξ), "To you the command is given, O peoples, nations and men of every language..."'

Κηρύσσω occurs 61 times in the NT, eight of which are in Acts.<sup>64</sup> Philip announces Christ to the Samaritans (8.5), Saul declares that Jesus is the Son of God in the synagogues of Damascus (9.20), John announces a baptism (10.37), Peter is ordered to announce that Jesus is the One who has been appointed by God as the Judge of the living and the dead (10.42), Moses is heralded in the synagogues every Sabbath (15.21), and Paul declares Jesus (19.13), the kingdom to the Ephesians (20.25), and the kingdom of God unhindered under house arrest in Rome (28.31). In nearly all of these occurrences there is a missional implication, and this evangelistic meaning continues to be the norm in subsequent Christian writing.<sup>65</sup>

### 3.2.1.3 'Witnesses'

Μάρτυς is another missional word in Acts, which is a common concept in the LXX, occurring 58 times in 48 different verses.<sup>66</sup> It means a witness, one who testifies in legal matters, and it is used this way throughout the ancient world.<sup>67</sup> Josephus is also fond of using μάρτυς.<sup>68</sup>

Luke shows that he is aware of this legal meaning of μάρτυς by using it of the false witnesses

<sup>64</sup> Κηρύσσω is popular in the synoptics and Paul. The related words κήρυγμα (proclamation, Mt 12.41; Lk 11.32; Rom 16.25; 1 Cor 1.21; 2.4; 15.14; 2 Tim 4.17; Tit 1.3), and κήρυξ (herald, proclaimer, 2 Pet 2.5; 1 Tim 2.7; 2 Tim 1.11) are not found in Acts. Luke never uses κηρύσσω of Peter's early speeches, but primarily of Paul, and the verb always takes a direct object, whether Christ, Moses, or the kingdom.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 7.57.3: 'thus setting Jonah, who *preached* repentance to the single city of Nineveh, before Jesus, who has *preached* repentance to the whole world, and with much greater results'; 3.40.20: 'Him also who first presented these truths to all nations through the disciples whom He had appointed, and whom He sent forth, furnished with divine power and authority, to *proclaim* the doctrine regarding God and His kingdom'; 1 Cl. 1.2: 'Who did not *publish abroad* your magnificent disposition of hospitality?'; 42.4: 'So *preaching* everywhere in country and town, they appointed their firstfruits, when they had proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons unto them that should believe.' See also TestLevi, 2.10: 'Thou shalt stand near the Lord, and shalt be his minister, and shalt declare his mysteries to men, and shall *proclaim* concerning him that shall redeem Israel.' TestLevi was likely originally composed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, and then significantly altered in a series of interpolations by later Christians, Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha*, 1.777-78.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. e.g., Gen 31.44: 'So now come, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it be a *witness* between you and me'; 31.47; Ex 20.16; 23.1; Lev 5.1; Num 5.13; Duet. 17.6: 'On the evidence of two *witnesses* or three *witnesses*, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one *witness*'; 19.15; Josh 22.27; Ps 35.11: 'Malicious *witnesses* rise up; They ask me of things that I do not know'; 88.38; Prov 6.19: 'A false *witness* who utters lies'; 12.17,19; 14.5,25; 19.5,9; 21.28; 24.28 (9 times in Prov); Mal 3.5; Isa 8.2: 'I will take to Myself faithful *witnesses* for testimony'; 43.9,10,12; 44.8; Jer 36.23; 39.10,25,44; 49.5.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Plato, *Republic*, 1.340a: 'if you are allowed to be his *witness*. But there is no need of any *witness*'; Polyb., *Hist.*, 11.6.4: 'call the gods to *witness*'; Xen., *Ages.*, 4.5: 'Lacedaemon bears *witness* that my statement is true.'

<sup>68</sup> Cf. e.g., Josephus, *Life*, 256: 'if I were to be judged as to my behavior...and had brought no more than two or three *witnesses*, good men and true'; *War*, 1.595: 'Hear then, O king, and be thou, and God himself, who cannot be deceived, *witnesses* to the truth of what I am going to say'; *Ant.*, 15.130: 'I shall begin with the first, and appeal to yourselves as *witnesses* to what I shall say'; 18.299: 'thinking it a dishonorable thing to be guilty of falsehood before so many *witnesses*'; 4.40: 'thou art the most authentic *witness* to what I have done.'

who are called before the Council to testify against Stephen (μάρτυρας ψευδεῖς, Acts 6.13), and also of the witnesses to Stephen's stoning (7.58).<sup>69</sup> However, his other 11 usages of μάρτυς in Acts are thoroughly Christian, all implying evangelistic witnessing.<sup>70</sup>

Luke's first and last usages of μάρτυς are the direct words of Jesus, emphasizing that this is a direct command from Christ himself: 'you shall be my *witnesses*...' (1.8), and, 'for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a *witness*...' (26.16).

Luke's message is that Jesus personally calls the disciples to be his witnesses. The primary thing that they are to witness to is the resurrection (1.22; 2.32; 3.15; 5.32; 10.41; 13.31).<sup>71</sup> This also makes them witnesses to the entire story of Jesus (10.39; cf. 26.22). This finds its ultimate expression in the most intense meaning of μάρτυς, which is that they are to witness to Christ even to the point of death and martyrdom (22.20, Stephen, God's witnessing martyr).<sup>72</sup> Later Christian literature continues to reflect both the secular and the uniquely Christian missional connotations of μάρτυς.<sup>73</sup>

Related to μάρτυς is the verb μαρτυρέω, which means to bear witness, or to testify, and occurs 13 times in 11 verses in the LXX.<sup>74</sup> It can have legal implications, such as a person who has seen or heard or experienced something, and therefore can give reliable testimony (as in Acts' court scenes, 22.5; 26.5).<sup>75</sup> In Acts, it often refers to a person of good

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<sup>69</sup> Luke's understanding of 'witness' is probably influenced by Isa 43.8-13. For a concise summary of this theme in Luke and Acts, see Weiser, *Apostel.*, 1.72-75.

<sup>70</sup> Acts 1.8; 1.22; 2.32; 3.15; 5.32; 10.39,41; 13.31; 22.15,20; 26.16. Once again we see how the early Christians took a common term for legal witnesses, and added an evangelistic orientation to it. They meant to convey that they were legal witnesses, but of a spiritual reality, in the sense that they had experienced personally the things they were testifying of, and their testimony was reliable and true.

<sup>71</sup> The resurrection is 'the divine vindication of Jesus, the proof that he was what he claimed to be, what the apostles now claimed that he was', Barrett, *Acts*, 1.79.

<sup>72</sup> The English word martyr comes from μάρτυς. Cf. *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 2.2; 14.2; 15.2; 16.2; 17.3; 19.1.

<sup>73</sup> 1 Cl. 63.3: 'And we have also sent faithful and prudent men...who shall also be *witnesses* between you and us'; Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 1.46.26: 'God is *witness* of our conscientious desire, not by false statements, but by testimonies of different kinds, to establish the divinity of the doctrine of Jesus'; 1.47.24: 'it happened on account of Jesus Christ, of whose divinity so many Churches are *witnesses*'.

<sup>74</sup> Gen 31.46,48; Num 35.30; Deut 19:15,18; 31.21; 2Chr. 28:10; 1Mac. 2:37,56; Lam 2:13; Dan 13:41. Many of these passages speak of testifying against somebody, or *accusing* them.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Josephus, *Against Apion*, 1.217: 'have they all of them *afforded their testimony* to our antiquity'; *Life*, 259: 'the united voices of all the people joined together, and called me their benefactor and savior, and *attested*

report, someone about whom there is reliable witness (6.3; 10.22; 13.22, God on David's behalf; 16.2; 22.12). Five occurrences of μαρτυρέω refer to evangelism, whether it is God himself doing the witnessing (14.3; 15.8), or the prophets (10.43), or Paul (23.11; 26.22).<sup>76</sup>

Another related word is the neuter noun μαρτύριον, which refers not to the person doing the witnessing (μάρτυς), but to the content or testimony of the witness itself. It occurs 257 times in 240 verses in the Septuagint.<sup>77</sup> It often carries the connotation of proof, usually in a statement that is brought as testimony by a witness.<sup>78</sup> Μαρτύριον occurs twice in Acts, once as a strong missional statement: 'And with great power the apostles were *giving testimony* to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus' (4.33). The other is a reference to the 'tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness' (7.44), so not a direct evangelistic statement.

There is also the related feminine equivalent, μαρτυρία, which also means a testimony, but emphasizes a person's attestation of something based on their own personal knowledge, belief or experience.<sup>79</sup> It occurs 37 times in the NT, but only once in Acts, when Jesus warns Paul to leave Jerusalem, 'because they will not accept your *testimony* about me' (22.18).

A final word related to μάρτυς is διαμαρτύρομαι. It is fairly common throughout the LXX,<sup>80</sup> and other ancient literature,<sup>81</sup> and usually means to state something in a way that

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to my former behavior'; *Ant.*, 12.135: 'my predecessors have *borne witness* to them, that they are faithful'; 6.355: 'I can bear witness that thou hast shown great diligence and kindness about me'; 12.134: 'he wrote to the generals of his armies, and to his friends, and *gave testimony* to the good behavior of the Jews towards him.'

<sup>76</sup> Thus five of the total 13 occurrences of μαρτυρέω can be counted as missional witnessing words. The rest are either legal court terms, referring to a person of good report, or 20.26, when Paul *testifies* to the Ephesian elders that he is innocent of the blood of all men. Note that 20.26 and 26.22 are in the middle, μαρτύρομαι.

<sup>77</sup> Very often referring to the 'tabernacle/tent of testimony' (σκηνην τοῦ μαρτυρίου), though not always. For an ex. not related to the tabernacle in LXX, cf. e.g., Gen 21.30: 'You shall take these seven ewe lambs from my hand so that it may be a *witness* to me, that I dug this well.' Cf. also, Josephus, *Ant.*, 6.66: 'laid up the book in the tabernacle of God, to be a *witness* to future generations of what he had foretold'; 1 Cl. 43.2,5: 'he took them and tied them and sealed them...and put them away in the *tabernacle of the testimony* on the table of God...opened the *tabernacle of the testimony* and drew forth the rods.'

<sup>78</sup> *BDAG*, 619.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. John's testimony of Jesus (Jn 1.19; 13 other times in Jn), and the believers' testimony (Rev 12.11; 8 other times in Rev).

<sup>80</sup> Occurs 26 times in 25 verses in LXX: Ex 18.20; 19.10,21: 'Go down, *warn* the people, so that they do not break through to the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish'; 21.28; Deut 4.26; 8.19; 30.19; 31.28; 32.46; 1 Kgdms 8.9: 'you shall solemnly *warn* them and tell them of the procedure of the king who will reign over them'; 2 Kgs 17.13,15; 2 Chr 24.19: 'though they *testified* against them, they would not listen'; Neh 9.26,34;

impresses the hearer with its seriousness, or to make a solemn declaration about something serious or weighty.<sup>82</sup> This often comes as a severe warning in cases of peril or danger, such as when Peter solemnly testifies and urges his hearers in Jerusalem, ‘*Be saved [διεμαρτύρατο] from this perverse generation!*’ (2.40). Of the 15 occurrences of *διαμαρτύρομαι* in the NT, 9 are in Acts, and they all relate to the sober urgency of the evangelistic witness. Peter solemnly testifies (2.40; 8.25, with John; 10.42), as does Paul (18.5; 20.21,24; 23.11; 28.23). The Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to Paul in every city he passes through, warning him that afflictions await him (20.23). *Διαμαρτύρομαι* is an important mission-proclamation concept in Acts, adding a dimension of sober warning of impending danger. By using it, Luke emphasizes that the early church regarded the mission as a matter of sober urgency, even of life or death, for those around them.

In an important discussion of the ‘witness’ word group, Bolt argues that they have a very limited application in Acts, only referring to the 12 apostles and to Paul.<sup>83</sup> He emphasizes the ‘unrepeatable’ nature of this ‘historically particular’ type of witnessing.<sup>84</sup>

This is technically incorrect, for Luke also clearly calls Stephen a *μάρτυς* (22.20).<sup>85</sup>

Additionally, in a narrative so dominated by these few characters, it is hardly surprising that they are the primary people associated with these words in Acts, for they are the primary

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13.21: ‘Then I warned them and said to them’; Ps 49.7: ‘O Israel, I will *testify* against you’; 80.9: ‘Hear, O My people, and I will admonish you’; Zech. 3.6: ‘the angel of the LORD *admonished* Joshua, saying’; Mal 2.14; Jer 6.10; 39.10,44; Eze. 16.2: ‘Son of man, *make known* to Jerusalem her abominations’; 20.4. Most of the LXX occurrences are warnings to the people of God’s impending judgment, or admonishing/imploring an individual. They are addressed to the people of God, and so are not explicitly missional or evangelistic in nature.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. e.g., Polyb., *Hist.*, 1.33.5: ‘Xanthippus at the same time *imploring* them not to let the opportunity slip’; 3.110.4: ‘he advanced with the object of approaching the enemy in spite of Aemilius’s strong *protests* and efforts to prevent him’; Xen., *Hellenica*, 3.2.13: ‘also for the purpose of *assuring* him that he was ready to make war together with him’; Cyr., 7.1.17: ‘do not you hurl yourself upon the opposing ranks, *I adjure you*’; Josephus, *Ant.*, 9.167: ‘sent prophets to *testify* to them what their actions were, and to bring them to leave off their wickedness’; 6.39: ‘*openly testified before them* into what a great change of affairs they are hastening.’

<sup>82</sup> *BDAG*, 233.

<sup>83</sup> P. Bolt, ‘Mission and Witness’, *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, I. H. Marshall, D. Peterson, eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998): 191-214.

<sup>84</sup> Bolt, ‘Mission’, 210-12, ‘according to Acts, the witnesses are a part of history, and it is impossible for their role to be extended to anyone else.’

<sup>85</sup> Bolt recognizes this fact, but only explains, ‘rather than being part of Acts’ technical usage, it may simply reflect Paul’s reminiscence of Stephen testifying at his trial’, ‘Mission’, 193.

missionaries. The argument that Acts 1.8 and the *μάρτυς* concept are not applicable to anyone beyond this select group of thirteen is unconvincing. Ultimately, this is all semantics, as there are other missional words which Acts clearly applies to other characters. Whether *μάρτυς* is a technical category for Luke or not, the practical outcome is identical, for Bolt's conclusion still involves Acts' readers in the ongoing mission initiated by Acts 1.8.<sup>86</sup>

#### 3.2.1.4 'Bold Preachers'

Another group of mission-oriented words in Acts is related to *παρρησία*, which connotes a plainness and openness of speech, which conceals nothing, and as a result, a state of boldness, confidence and courage in the speaker.<sup>87</sup> It has an extensive use in ancient literature,<sup>88</sup> all consistent with this general connotation.<sup>89</sup> In the LXX, it has a similar meaning, though it also acquires the nuance of boldness, confidence, or dignity in the face of opposition or before God.<sup>90</sup> Similar to other words already studied, the early Christians took this concept and added a unique missional or evangelistic dimension to it.

<sup>86</sup> 'Since that word is a message that all must hear, the believer will evangelize others, urging them to call upon the name of the risen Lord. In doing so, the readers join Luke's second word [Acts] in taking salvation even unto the ends of the earth.' Bolt, 'Mission', 214. Bolt also makes the insightful suggestion that Acts itself should be understood as a missional word or *λόγος*, which operates as a witness of Christ in itself, 213-14.

<sup>87</sup> *BDAG*, 781. It comes from *πᾶς* (all, every) and *ῥησις* (speech).

<sup>88</sup> Classical uses of *παρρησία* fall into two general categories: 1) Outspokenness, frankness, freedom of speech – Euripides, *Hippolytus*; *Bacchae*; *Phoenissae*; Aristophanes, *Thesmophoriazusa*; Isocrates, *Epistulae*; Plato, *Republica*; Demosthenes, *Epistulae/Proemia*; Dinarchus, *Fragmenta*; Polyb., *Fragmenta*, and 2) License of tongue – Isocrates, *Epistulae*; Plato, *Phaedrus*. Thus it can have both a positive connotation (the freedom to speak out with openness and frankness), and a negative connotation (a loose tongue).

<sup>89</sup> Cf. e.g., Dio Cassius, 62.13.2: '*frankness of speech* was characteristic of Burrus and he employed it with such boldness...'; Philo, *Special Laws*, 1.321: 'But to those who do such things as are for the common advantage, let there be *freedom of speech*'; Josephus, *Ant.*, 6.256: 'But the high priest...*confessed boldly* that he had supplied him with these things'; 1.203; 4.74; 3.138; Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 3.57.20: 'while *we promise, openly and not in secret*, that they will be happy who live according to the word of God.' Sometimes it also simply means boldness or courage, such as, Josephus, *Ant.*, 2.52: 'he told her, that in the company of her husband she might have *great boldness* from a good conscience'; 2.131; 5.38: 'So they entered into Jericho, and slew all the men that were therein...and their *courage* was become useless, and they were not able to defend themselves'; 16.377; 1 Cl. 34.1: 'The good workman receives *boldly* the bread of his labour'; 35.2: 'life in immortality, cheerfulness in righteousness, truth in liberty, faith in *confidence*, temperance in sanctification.' In koine Greek literature, it generally means freedom of speech or of conduct, and often carries the idea of boldness with it. It is an honorable thing to possess, as long as it is displayed with moderation.

<sup>90</sup> 12 total LXX occurrences, in these categories: 1) *Dignity, boldness, confidence*: before God (Lev 26.13; Job 27.10); in the face of opposition (4 Mac 10.5; Wisdom 5.1); lack thereof because of unrighteousness (Prov 13.5); 2) *Outspokenness, freedom of speech, freedom to speak or act openly*: in the streets (Prov 1.20; Esth 8.13; 3 Mac 4.1); on the battlefield (1 Mac 4.18); 3) *Liberality*: foolish tongue (Prov 10.10); radical or carefree action (3 Mac 7.12); figuratively (Jesus Sirach 25:25). Again, both positive and negative connotations exist.

All five occurrences of *παρρησία* in Acts relate to the bold missional witness to the gospel. Peter confidently proclaims to the people that David's tomb is still visible at Pentecost (2.29), the apostles are empowered to speak the word with all confidence (4.29,31), and Paul preaches the kingdom of God in Rome with all openness and boldness, totally unhindered (28.31). It is this concept that is at the heart of 4.13: 'As they observed the confidence (*παρρησίαν*) of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.' This adds an element of confidence, boldness, and openness into the missional ethos and praxis of the early church in Acts. The rest of the NT does not reflect this missional dimension of *παρρησία*, but, with two exceptions, uses it in the more general non-missional sense of the believer's ability to have confidence and boldness in the presence of God.<sup>91</sup>

The verbal form of *παρρησία* is *παρρησιάζομαι*, which means to speak out freely, fearlessly, and boldly, showing assurance and confidence.<sup>92</sup> In the LXX it generally means to cry out, to shine forth boldly, or to declare.<sup>93</sup> Of the nine occurrences in the NT, seven are in Acts, and they all relate to the evangelistic effort of the early church.<sup>94</sup> Paul speaks out boldly and fearlessly at Damascus (9.27), in Jerusalem (9.28), in Pisidian Antioch with

<sup>91</sup> 26 total NT occurrences outside of Acts, in these categories: 1) *Plain, open, public*: speech (Mk 8:32; Jn 7:13; 7:26; 10:24; 11:14; 16:25; 16:29; 18:20); known publicly (Jn 7:4); walk publicly (Jn 11:54); public display (Col 2:15); 2) *Confidence, boldness, courage*: pertaining to hope (2 Cor 3:12; Heb 3:6); in light of persecution (2 Cor 7:4; Heb 10:35); because of faith (Eph 3:12; 1 Tim 3:13); to command in the name of Christ (Phlm 8); before the throne of God (Heb 4:16); in the holy places (Heb 10:19); at Christ's Second Coming (1 Jn 2:28); before God (1 Jn 3:21); before the Lord in the day of judgment (1 Jn 4:17); believers requests to God (1 Jn 5:14). There are two possible missional occurrences outside of Acts in the NT: Eph 6.19: 'pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel'; Phil 1.20: 'that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.'

<sup>92</sup> *BDAG*, 782. This was the common usage, cf. e.g., Xen., *Ages.*, 11.5: 'he never resented *candour*, but avoided dissimulation like a snare'; Cyr., 5.3.8: 'he and I have often *talked together freely*'; Diodorus Siculus, 14.7.6: 'The man appointed by Dionysius to command the men at first warned one of those who were *freespoken*...'; 23.12.1: 'When Hanno and his companions continued to *voice their opinions frankly* to him, he threatened them insolently'; Josephus, *Ant.*, 16.377: 'as he was so bold, he seemed not to have kept himself out of danger, by *speaking so freely*.'

<sup>93</sup> 5 occurrences in LXX: Ps 11.6; 93.1; Prov 20.9; Job 22.26; Sir 6.11.

<sup>94</sup> The other two NT occurrences are also explicitly missional – Eph 6.20: 'of which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may *speak boldly*, as I ought to speak'; 1 Thes 2.2: 'we had the *boldness in our God to speak to you* the gospel of God amid much opposition.'

Barnabas (13.46), in Iconium with Barnabas (14.3), in Ephesus (19.8), and before Festus (26.26). Apollos also speaks out confidently in the synagogue in Ephesus (18.26).

### 3.2.1.5 'Explainers' and 'Teachers'

Διανοίγω is another word with a missionary connotation in Acts. It means to open, and can be used literally, such as in 7.56, when God *opens* (διηνοιγμένους) up the heavens (cf. Lk 2.23). It can also be used figuratively, as when the Lord *opens* (διήνοιξε) Lydia's heart to respond to Paul's message in Philippi (16.14). It can also imply an explanation or interpretation, such as when Paul *explains* (διανοίγων) that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead to the Thessalonians (17.3). The latter two incidents are missional occurrences of διανοίγω in Acts, which occurs eight total times in the NT.

Διδάσκω means to teach, explain, or instruct.<sup>95</sup> It is common in antiquity,<sup>96</sup> and occurs 103 times in the LXX.<sup>97</sup> It occurs 16 times in the book of Acts, of which six are focused on teaching an existing church or believer (1.1; 11.26; 15.1,35; 18.11; 20.20),<sup>98</sup> while 10 are oriented towards the nonbeliever, in an evangelistic setting.<sup>99</sup> Although many think of teaching in the NT as being focused towards believers, Luke uses διδάσκω to refer to evangelistic teaching towards those who are not yet Christ-followers nearly twice as often.<sup>100</sup> Luke wants the reader to understand that mission permeated the early church's activities.

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<sup>95</sup> BDAG, 241.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. e.g., Xen., *Cyr.*, 1.6.20: 'most of the laws seem to me to *teach* these two things above all else, to govern and to be governed'; *Mem.*, 1.2.10: 'they who cultivate wisdom and think they will be able to *guide* the people in prudent policy never lapse into violence'; Josephus, *Ant.*, 9.4: 'When he had himself *instructed* them thus, and gone over every city of the two tribes, he returned to Jerusalem'; 8.395: 'commanded them to go round the land, and *teach* all the people that were under him, city by city, the laws of Moses.'

<sup>97</sup> It often means teaching or tradition in the LXX, e.g., Isa 29.13: 'this people draw near with their words and honor me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from me, and their reverence for me consists of *tradition* learned.' Dan 1.4: 'and he ordered him to *teach* them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.' Διδάσκω also occurs 97 total times in 91 verses in the NT.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Acts 13.1, the teachers, διδάσκαλος, who were at the church at Antioch.

<sup>99</sup> 4.2,18, in the temple; 5.21,25,28,42, in the temple after being released from prison, and from house to house; 18.25, Apollos in the Ephesian synagogues; 21.21,28, the Jerusalem Jews; 28.31, in Rome.

<sup>100</sup> It may be that the offices of evangelist and teacher (Eph 4.11) were not quite as separated as some have assumed. This is an example of how nearly all activities of the early church were infused with a missional orientation; even when church leaders were teaching, they were often doing so with nonbelievers in mind.



### 3.2.1.6 'Apologists' and 'Debaters'

Συζητέω is another word in Acts pertinent to the outreach of the early church. Unlike most other words previously examined, it seems to be a recent development in the first century.<sup>101</sup> It means to discuss, and particularly in Acts, to contend with intense persistence for a point of view, to dispute, debate, or argue.<sup>102</sup> This is what Stephen does with those from the Synagogue of the Freedmen, who are unable to cope with the wisdom with which he speaks (6.9). Paul also argues and debates with the Hellenistic Jews in this fashion in Jerusalem (9.29). Συζητέω is not a passive concept in Acts, but a confrontational form of apologetic debate, which both Stephen and Paul engage in.<sup>103</sup>

Related in meaning to συζητέω is πείθω, which in the NT means to cause to come to a particular point of view or course of action through persuasion and convincing.<sup>104</sup> Its stem, πείθω, has the meaning of trust, which is its normal intransitive connotation throughout ancient Semitic writing, where it is always in the middle or passive form.<sup>105</sup> The transitive active form is more common in ancient Greek literature, and means to persuade or convince.<sup>106</sup> Of

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<sup>101</sup> It does not exist in the LXX, or other classical writers. Cf. 2 Esdr 12.4; Justin, *D.*, 102.5, for other usages.

<sup>102</sup> *BDAG*, 954.

<sup>103</sup> This form of aggressive debate is what causes Stephen to be killed, and nearly caused Paul to be killed as well (9.29). Cf. 1 Cor 1.20: the debater or disputant (συζητητής). The related noun, ζήτησις, a dispute or debate, occurs three times in Acts (15.2,7; 28.29), but never in an evangelistic context.

<sup>104</sup> *BDAG*, 791.

<sup>105</sup> It occurs 175 times in the LXX, usually meaning to trust in, rely upon, take refuge in, wait for, or be confident in. Its versatility allowed it to be used to translate at least 10 different Hebrew words with these meanings. Cf. e.g., Deut 28.52; Ps 25.2; 57.1; Jer 7.4; 48.7; Prov 21.22. It often describes Israel's covenant relationship or lack thereof with God, and is closely related to πιστεύω in the LXX. The Greek idea of persuading is virtually non-existent in the LXX. For possible exceptions, cf. 2 Mac 4.45: 'Menelaus, seeing himself on the losing side, promised Ptolemy, son of Dorymenes, a substantial sum of money if he would *win the king over*'; Pr. 26.25: 'When he speaks graciously, *do not believe* [do not be convinced by] him.'

<sup>106</sup> Xen., *Mem.*, 1.2.45: 'when the minority passes enactments, not by *persuading* the majority, but through using its power, are we to call that force or not? Everything, I think, that men constrain others to do "without *persuasion*," whether by enactment or not, is not law, but force. It follows then, that whatever the assembled majority, through using its power over the owners of property, enacts without *persuasion* is not law, but force'; *Anabasis*, 1.3.19: 'he should either offer sufficient *persuasion* and lead us on with him, or yield to our *persuasion* and let us go home; *Cyr.*, 6.1.34: 'but if he could *win her consent*, he himself would interpose no objection'; Herod., *Hist.*, 2.146.1: 'every man may adopt that one which he shall find the *more credible* when he hears it'; Polyb., *Hist.*, 4.64.2: 'tried to *persuade* him to cross at Rhium and invade Elis'; Josephus, *Against Apion*, 2.201: 'It commands us also, when we marry, not to have regard to portion, nor to take a woman by violence, nor to *persuade* her deceitfully and knavishly'; *Ant.*, 8.251: 'they could not *persuade* God to be on their side'; 4.123: 'that I may see whether I can *persuade* God to permit me to bind these men with curses.'

the 17 total occurrences in Acts of *πειθω*, at least seven are explicitly missional in nature.<sup>107</sup>

Many are persuaded in the synagogue in Thessalonica to join Paul and Silas (17.4), Paul reasons in the synagogue in Corinth every Sabbath, attempting to persuade both Jews and Greeks (18.4), works to persuade people in Ephesus about the kingdom of God (19.8), persuades people throughout all of Asia (19.26), attempts to persuade Agrippa to become a Christian (26.28), and finally, persuades Jews in Rome about the kingdom of God (28.23,24). This persuasion is another type of outreach in Acts, which Paul particularly employs.

Another similar word in Acts is *διαλέγομαι*, which means to engage in speech interchange, converse, discourse, argue, or discuss.<sup>108</sup> There are 2 instances of *διαλέγομαι* in Acts which are specifically directed towards the church, when Paul speaks all night in Troas (20.7,9). The other eight occurrences are all missional in nature, and take a more persuasive conversational tone:<sup>109</sup> Paul discusses with the Jews in Thessalonica from the Scriptures (17.2), converses in the synagogue and in the marketplace in Athens (17.17), reasons in the synagogue in Corinth (18.4), and in Ephesus (18.19; 19.8,9), is accused of carrying on a discussion in Jerusalem (24.12), and discusses righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come with Felix (24.25). Paul is a particularly persuasive and even argumentative missionary in Acts, for he frequently engages in *συζητέω*, *πειθω*, and *διαλέγομαι*.

*Παρατίθημι* literally means to set something before someone.<sup>110</sup> This is the meaning of Acts 16.34, when the jail keeper 'sets food' before Paul and Silas after he has believed and

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<sup>107</sup> The word occurs 53 times in the NT, reflecting both the LXX understanding of trusting in, and the Greek understanding of persuasion. Luke primarily uses the second.

<sup>108</sup> *BDAG*, 232. It occurs 6 times in the LXX, all with the meaning of speaking or discussing: Ex 6.27: 'They were the ones who *spoke* to Pharaoh'; 1 Esdr 8.45; Esth 15.15; 2 Mac 11.20; Sir 14.20; Isa 63.1: 'It is I who *speak* in righteousness.' Cf. also, Xen., *Mem.*, 1.6.1: 'A *conversation* he had with Antiphon the Sophist'; 2.10.1: 'Again I recall the following *conversation* between him and his companion Diodorus'; Josephus, *Ant.*, 7.278: 'While these rulers were thus *disputing* one with another.'

<sup>109</sup> This seems to be a later Christian development, to describe conversational evangelism.

<sup>110</sup> 37 in 35 vs. in the LXX: Gen 18.8; 24.33; 30.38; 43.31,32; Ex 19.7; 21.1.; Lev 5.23; 6.3; Deut 4.44; 1 Sam 9.24; 21.7; 28.22; 2 Sam 12.20; 2 Kgs 5.24; 6.22,23; 2 Chr 16.10; Judith 4.5; Tob 1.14; 4.1,20; 7.8; 10.13; 1 Mac 1.35; 9.35; 4 Mac 6.15; Ps 30.6; Prov 23.1; Sir 15.16; Bar 6.26,29; Dan 14.11,18,21.

been baptized.<sup>111</sup> It also has the connotation of entrusting somebody to God for safekeeping, placing them before him, or commending them to him (14.23; 20.32). Finally, it can have a verbal connotation, as in setting forward certain arguments or proofs.<sup>112</sup> Paul puts evidence before the Jews in Thessalonica about how Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead (17.3). The sense here is of a demonstration, of Paul thoroughly setting out his evidence.<sup>113</sup> Thus, παρατίθημι here has an apologetic function in evangelism.

Ἐκτίθημι similarly means to place or set out, to put outside, or to expose.<sup>114</sup> This is how Stephen speaks of baby Moses being ‘set outside’, when Pharaoh’s daughter finds him (7.21).<sup>115</sup> It can also have a metaphorical meaning, such as when Peter ‘explains in an orderly sequence’ (ἐξέτιθετο) what has just happened at Cornelius’ household (11.4), or when Priscilla and Aquila take Apollos aside and ‘explain the way of God more accurately’ to him (αὐτῷ ἐξέθεντο τὴν ὁδὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ, 18.26). Luke uses the word in an evangelistic context when Paul attempts to ‘set forth’ accurately (ἐξέτιθετο) the kingdom of God to the Jews in Rome (28.23). Ἐκτίθημι is unique to Acts in the NT, although other ancient authors use it.<sup>116</sup>

### 3.2.1.7 ‘Exhorters’

Παρακαλέω in Acts relates to preaching, and conveys the sense of making a request for something, encouraging, imploring, or exhorting.<sup>117</sup> It is used extensively throughout the

<sup>111</sup> It is frequently used of food, cf. Gen 18.8: ‘He took...the calf which he had prepared, and *placed it* before them’; 24.33: ‘But when food was *set before him* to eat...’; 2 Kgdms 12.20: ‘When he requested, they *set food before him* and he ate’; Josephus, *War*, 7.264: ‘the food was unlawful that was *set upon* his table.’

<sup>112</sup> Cf. e.g., Xen., *Cyr.*, 1.6.14: ‘And you laughed and went through it all, *explaining point by point*, as you asked of what conceivable use tactics could be to an army’; Ex 19.7: ‘So Moses came and called the elders of the people, and *set before them* all these words which the LORD had commanded him’; 21.1: ‘Now these are the ordinances which you are to *set before them*’; not just verbally, but also in writing, cf. Josephus, *Life*, 6: ‘Thus have I *set down* the genealogy of my family as I have found it described in the public records.’

<sup>113</sup> BDAG, 772.

<sup>114</sup> BDAG, 310. Ἐκτίθημι shares the τίθημι root (to place, commit, set before) with παρατίθημι, but its meaning is not derived from its etymology (the etymological fallacy), but from its established literary usage in antiquity.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Philo, *Moses*, 1.12, which refers to this same incident using the same word, and Josephus, *Against Apion*, 1.308: ‘the rest were gotten together, and sent into desert places, in order to be *exposed* to destruction.’

<sup>116</sup> BDAG, 310. Josephus, *Ant.*, 1.214: ‘I will presently *give a particular account, with great exactness*’; 2 Mac 11.36: ‘that we may *present them* to your advantage.’ It occurs 13 times in 12 verses in the LXX: Esth 3.14; 4.3.8; 8.13,14,17; 9.14; 16.19; 2 Mac 11.36; Job 36.15; Wis. 18.5; Dan 5.7.

<sup>117</sup> BDAG, 772.

LXX<sup>118</sup> and in ancient literature in general.<sup>119</sup> It derives from *παρά* (to the side) and *καλέω* (to call, invite), and occurs 109 times in the NT, and 22 times in Acts. Of these, at least 9 convey the sense of preaching, but most are to existing believers, and should be understood as encouraging and edifying preaching. However, Peter exhorts his listeners to be saved from their perverse generation (2.40), and Paul exhorts those throughout Macedonia (20.2).<sup>120</sup>

*Παράκλησις* is the exhortation or help that is given, and should be understood as a request or appeal.<sup>121</sup> It is used in the LXX,<sup>122</sup> and in other ancient literature,<sup>123</sup> and 29 times in the NT.<sup>124</sup> Similar to *παρακαλέω*, three of the four occurrences in Acts are directed towards believers (4.36; 9.31; 15.31). However, Paul and Barnabas are invited to share any ‘word of exhortation’ in the evangelistic setting of the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch (13.15).

### 3.2.1.8 ‘Speakers’

*Ἀποφθέγγομαι* is not a word for everyday speech in Acts, but for dignified and elevated discourse, when something with imperative or controversial content is being declared.<sup>125</sup> It is

<sup>118</sup> 137 occurrences in 129 verses. In the LXX, it often means to comfort or to strengthen; cf. e.g., Gen 24.67: ‘thus Isaac was *comforted* after his mother’s death’; Gen 37.35: ‘Then all his sons and all his daughters arose to *comfort* him, but he refused to be *comforted*’; Deut 3.28: ‘But charge Joshua and *encourage* him and *strengthen* him.’ For a different nuance, cf. 1 Mac 9.35: ‘Jonathan sent his brother as leader of the convoy to *ask permission* of his friends.’ G. Stahlin, commenting on *παρακαλέω*, writes, ‘It is striking that in the Hellenistic world more is heard of asking and exhortation, while the emphasis is on comfort where the influence of the OT is felt. One may ask whether this is coincidental, or whether it expresses the comfortlessness which burdened Hellenism and the consolation hoped for in the world of the OT’, ‘*παρακαλέω*’, *TDNT* 5, 779-93, citing 787.

<sup>119</sup> For Josephus’ usage, which generally has the connotation of requesting or imploring, cf. *Ant.*, 6.143: ‘he [Samuel] was in confusion, and began to *beseech* God all that night to be reconciled to Saul’; 11.338: ‘And when they *entreated* him that he would permit the Jews in Babylon and Media to enjoy their own laws’; 6.25: ‘he sacrificed it for the multitude, and *besought* God to hold his protecting hand over them’; 14.168: ‘those women continued every day in the temple, *persuading* the king and the people that Herod might undergo a trial.’<sup>120</sup> 28.20 can also be understood missionally.

<sup>121</sup> *Παράκλητος*, helper or encourager, is how John describes the Holy Spirit (Jn 14.16,26; 16.26; 16.7).

<sup>122</sup> Occurs 16 times in the LXX, generally used for encouragement, consolation, or exhortation – 1 Mac 10.24: ‘I too will write them *conciliatory words* and offer dignities and gifts’; 2 Mac 7.24: ‘the king *appealed* to him, not with mere words, but with promises on oath’; 15.11; Ps 93.19: ‘When my anxious thoughts multiply within me, Your *consolations* delight my soul’; Job 21.2: ‘let this be your *consolation*’; PssSol 13.10; Hos 13.14: ‘*Compassion* will be hidden from My sight’; Nah 3.7; Is. 28.29; 30.7; 57.18; 66.11; Jer 16.7; 38.9.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Polyb., *Hist.*, 1.67.10: ‘to make demands or *entreaties* through their officers’; 1.72.4: ‘the male population required no *incitement* to revolt’; Thuc., *Hist.*, 8.92.1; Josephus, *Life*, 87: ‘many of them gladly received that *invitation* of his’; *Ant.*, 3.22: ‘he *requested* of God for some succor for the people.’

<sup>124</sup> It is used exclusively by Luke and Paul in the NT, and can mean an encouragement/exhortation, a request/appeal, comfort/consolation, or a persuasive discourse/powerful oratory address.

<sup>125</sup> *BDAG*, 588. *Ἀποφθέγγομαι* was used of wise men, oracle-givers, diviners, prophets, exorcists, and other such inspired persons in the ancient world. A glance at its 6 occurrences in the LXX illustrates this – 1 Chr

unique to Acts in the NT, occurring three times: when the twelve speak in tongues at Pentecost (2.4), when Peter preaches on that same day (2.14), and when Paul responds to Festus by saying, ‘I am not out of my mind...but *I utter words of sober truth*’ (26.25). Each of these is an instance of divinely inspired speech, and also of evangelistic speaking in Acts.

Λαλέω has the connotation of making sounds, and of talking or speaking.<sup>126</sup> It occurs 59 times in Acts, and although none are ‘missional’ in themselves, at least 31 are evangelistic in nature when the context is taken into consideration.<sup>127</sup> The first four relate to speaking in tongues (2.4,6,7,11).<sup>128</sup> The next five are about speaking evangelistically to the people with boldness, regardless of the warnings of the officials (4.1,17,20,29,31). 5.20 is an emphatic command from the angel of the Lord: ‘Go, stand and *speak* (λαλεῖτε) to the people in the temple the whole message of this life.’ Similarly, the angel promises Cornelius that Peter, ‘will *speak* (λαλήσει) words to you by which you will be saved’ (11.14). There are at least six times when Christians speak the word in an evangelistic way (8.25; 11.19; 13.46; 14.25; 16.6,32). In 18.9, Jesus appears to Paul in a vision: ‘Do not be afraid, but *go on speaking* (λάλει) and do not be silent.’ There are 13 other evangelistic occurrences of λαλέω in Acts,<sup>129</sup> all of which highlight the connection between speaking and people coming to faith.

Λέγω means to express oneself orally, utter in words, or give expression to something.<sup>130</sup> There are 234 total occurrences of λέγω in Acts, of which 20 occur in a

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25.1: ‘the sons of Asaph and of Heman and of Jeduthun, who were to *prophesy* with lyres, harps and cymbals’; Ps 58.8: ‘Behold, [the nations] *belch* forth with their mouth’; Mic 5.11: ‘you will have *fortune-tellers* no more’; Zech. 10.2: ‘the *idols speak deceit*’; Ezek 13.9: ‘the prophets who see false visions and *utter lying divinations*’; 13.19: ‘by your *lying* to My people who listen to lies.’ Plut., *De Pyth. Oracle*, 23 (405E), uses the word of the Pythia’s oracles; cf. TJob 48.3; 51.1; Philo, *Moses*, 2.33. Barrett, *Acts*, 1.116-17. Luke reserves its use for speech which is not of human origin, but from the Spirit. This is surprising, given the negative LXX usage.

<sup>126</sup> It occurs 271 times in the NT, and 1127 times in the LXX. For other explicitly missional instances of λαλέω in the NT, cf. Rom 15.18; 1 Cor 2.6,7,13; 2 Cor 2.17; Eph 6.20; Phil 1.14; Col 4.3,4; 1 Thes 2.2,4,16; Heb 13.7.

<sup>127</sup> Λαλέω can be considered to be missional only in collocation with other words or phrases, particularly with an accusative direct object.

<sup>128</sup> That this is evangelistic is made explicit in v. 11, where they are speaking of the mighty deeds of God in different tongues, understandable to their culturally diverse hearers

<sup>129</sup> 5.40; 6.10; 9.29; 10.44; 11.15,20; 13.42; 14.1,9; 16.13,14; 17.19; 18.25.

<sup>130</sup> BDAG, 588. It occurs 2078 times, in 1950 verses, in the LXX, and 1993 times in the NT.

missional context.<sup>131</sup> These are mostly the introductions to direct evangelistic quotes, given in a missional setting. For example, ‘They [Paul and Silas] *said* (εἶπαν) [to the jail keeper in Philippi] “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your whole household” (16.31). And in Rome, ‘Some [Jews] were being persuaded by *the things spoken* (λεγόμενοις), but others did not believe’ (28.24).

Φημί is similar to λέγω, and means to state something orally, or make something known, often introducing direct discourse.<sup>132</sup> Of its 25 occurrences in Acts, five are in a directly missional context: Peters call the crowd to repent at Pentecost (2.38), Stephen’s evangelistic speech (7.2), Paul’s missional speech in Athens (17.22), Paul’s defence speech in Jerusalem (22.2), and when Paul speaks to Festus in Caesarea (26.25).

### 3.2.1.9 Results

**Table 3.1 Missional Words in Acts (in order of relevant missional occurrences)<sup>133</sup>**

**Key:** Greek word, *definition* (relevant missional occurrences: total occurrences in Acts)

\*indicates that the word is used exclusively in a missional context in Acts

1. λαλέω, <i>to speak</i> (31:59)	14. *Παρρησία, <i>bold and fearless speech</i> (5:5)
2. λέγω, <i>to talk</i> (20:234)	15. Παρακαλέω, <i>to implore, exhort</i> (3:22)
3. *Εὐαγγελίζομαι, <i>to preach, evangelize</i> (15:15)	16. Διακονία, <i>mission, ministry</i> (3:8)
4. Μάρτυς, <i>a witness</i> (11:13)	17. *Αποφθέγγομαι, <i>to declare soberly</i> (3:3)
5. *Καταγγέλλω, <i>to proclaim broadly</i> (10:10)	18. *Εὐαγγέλιον, <i>the gospel message</i> (2:2)
6. Διδάσκω, <i>to teach, instruct</i> (10:16)	19. Διανοίγω, <i>to open up, explain</i> (2:3)
7. *Διαμαρτύρομαι, <i>to solemnly warn</i> (9:9)	20. *Συζητέω, <i>to dispute, debate</i> (2:2)
8. *Κηρύσσω, <i>to herald, publicly announce</i> (8:8)	21. *Εὐαγγελιστής, <i>a preacher, evangelist</i> (1:1)
9. Διαλέγομαι, <i>to converse, discuss</i> (8:10)	22. Παράκλησις, <i>an exhortation</i> (1:4)
10. *Παρρησιάζομαι, <i>to speak boldly, fearlessly</i> (7:7)	23. Παρατίθημι, <i>to set evidence before</i> (1:4)
11. Πείθω, <i>to persuade, convince</i> (7:17)	24. Ἐκτίθημι, <i>to put forth, explain</i> (1:4)
12. Φημί, <i>to state something orally</i> (5:25)	25. Μαρτύριον, <i>a testimony</i> (1:2)
13. Μαρτυρέω, <i>to bear witness</i> (5:12)	26. *Καταγγελεύς, <i>a proclaimer</i> (1:1)

<sup>131</sup> Cf. 2.40; 3.4,6; 4.8,19; 8.6; 9.34; 11.4; 13.16; 14.15,18; 16.31; 17.7; 19.25,26; 21.40; 23.1; 28.17,24,25. Similar to λαλέω, λέγω is not inherently ‘missional’, or a technical term for mission on its own, but it does have significant evangelistic connotations in certain missional contexts in Acts, particularly when introducing a missional quote or speech.

<sup>132</sup> BDAG, 1053. The previous footnote applies equally to φημί. It occurs once in the LXX (Dan 13.55), but is frequent in texts of nearly all periods.

<sup>133</sup> A relevant occurrence is defined as one which is clearly and explicitly missional, i.e., in the context of evangelism towards a nonbeliever. Some of these words are used in multiple non-missional contexts, while others are only used in an outreach context (these are indicated by an asterisk). As the text of Acts is examined in depth in parts 2-5, these missional words will frequently be noted.



<b>Table 3.2</b> <b>Location of Missional</b>	<b>Acts 7: 1 (1)</b>	<b>Acts 14: 10 (8)</b>	<b>Acts 19: 8 (5)</b>
<b>Words in Acts</b>	2 <b>φημί</b>	1 <b>λαλέω</b>	*8 <b>παρρησιάζομαι, πείθω, διαλέγομαι</b>
Key: Chapter: # of occurrences (# of verses) *Indicates a verse with multiple missional words	<b>Acts 8: 9 (7)</b> 4 <b>εὐαγγελίζομαι</b> 5 <b>κηρύσσω</b> 6 <b>λέγω</b> 12 <b>εὐαγγελίζομαι</b> *25 <b>εὐαγγελίζομαι, διαμαρτύρομαι, λαλέω</b>	*3 <b>μαρτυρέω, παρρησιάζομαι</b> 7 <b>εὐαγγελίζομαι</b> 9 <b>λαλέω</b> *15 <b>εὐαγγελίζομαι, λέγω</b> 18 <b>λέγω</b> 21 <b>εὐαγγελίζομαι</b> 25 <b>λαλέω</b>	9 <b>διαλέγομαι</b> 13 <b>κηρύσσω</b> 25 <b>λέγω</b> *26 <b>λέγω, πείθω</b>
<b>Acts 1: 2 (2)</b> 8 <b>μάρτυς</b> 22 <b>μάρτυς</b>	35 <b>εὐαγγελίζομαι</b> 40 <b>εὐαγγελίζομαι</b>	<b>Acts 15: 5 (5)</b> 7 <b>εὐαγγέλιον</b> 8 <b>μαρτυρέω</b> 21 <b>κηρύσσω</b> 35 <b>εὐαγγελίζομαι</b> 36 <b>καταγγέλλω</b>	<b>Acts 20: 7 (5)</b> 2 <b>παρακαλέω</b> 21 <b>διαμαρτύρομαι</b> 23 <b>διαμαρτύρομαι</b> *24 <b>εὐαγγέλιον, διαμαρτύρομαι, διακονία</b> 25 <b>κηρύσσω</b>
<b>Acts 2: 12 (9)</b> *4 <b>λαλέω, ἀποφθέγγομαι</b> 6 <b>λαλέω</b> 7 <b>λαλέω</b> 11 <b>λαλέω</b> 14 <b>ἀποφθέγγομαι</b> 29 <b>παρρησία</b> 32 <b>μάρτυς</b> 38 <b>φημί</b> *40 <b>διαμαρτύρομαι, λέγω, παρακαλέω</b>	<b>Acts 9: 6 (5)</b> 20 <b>κηρύσσω</b> 27 <b>παρρησιάζομαι</b> 28 <b>παρρησιάζομαι</b> *29 <b>λαλέω, συζητέω</b> 34 <b>λέγω</b>	<b>Acts 16: 9 (8)</b> 6 <b>λαλέω</b> 10 <b>εὐαγγελίζομαι</b> 13 <b>λαλέω</b> *14 <b>διανοίγω, λαλέω</b> 17 <b>καταγγέλλω</b> 21 <b>καταγγέλλω</b> 31 <b>λέγω</b> 32 <b>λαλέω</b>	<b>Acts 21: 5 (5)</b> 8 <b>εὐαγγελιστής</b> 19 <b>διακονία</b> 21 <b>διδάσκω</b> 28 <b>διδάσκω</b> 40 <b>λέγω</b>
<b>Acts 3: 3 (3)</b> 4 <b>λέγω</b> 6 <b>λέγω</b> 15 <b>μάρτυς</b>	<b>Acts 10: 8 (7)</b> 36 <b>εὐαγγελίζομαι</b> 37 <b>κηρύσσω</b> *42 <b>κηρύσσω, διαμαρτύρομαι</b>	<b>Acts 17: 13 (10)</b> 2 <b>διαλέγομαι</b> *3 <b>καταγγέλλω, διανοίγω, παρατίθημι</b> 4 <b>πείθω</b> 7 <b>λέγω</b> 13 <b>καταγγέλλω</b> 17 <b>διαλέγομαι</b> *18 <b>εὐαγγελίζομαι, καταγγελεύς</b> 19 <b>λαλέω</b> 22 <b>φημί</b> 23 <b>καταγγέλλω</b>	<b>Acts 22: 3 (3)</b> 2 <b>φημί</b> 15 <b>μάρτυς</b> 20 <b>μάρτυς</b>
<b>Acts 4: 14 (11)</b> 1 <b>λαλέω</b> *2 <b>καταγγέλλω, διδάσκω</b> 8 <b>λέγω</b> 13 <b>παρρησία</b> 17 <b>λαλέω</b> 18 <b>διδάσκω</b> 19 <b>λέγω</b> 20 <b>λαλέω</b> *29 <b>παρρησία, λαλέω</b> *31 <b>παρρησία, λαλέω</b> 33 <b>μαρτύριον</b>	39 <b>μάρτυς</b> 41 <b>μάρτυς</b> 43 <b>μαρτυρέω</b> 44 <b>λαλέω</b>	<b>Acts 18: 8 (6)</b> *4 <b>πείθω, διαλέγομαι</b> 5 <b>διαμαρτύρομαι</b> 9 <b>λαλέω</b> 19 <b>διαλέγομαι</b> *25 <b>διδάσκω, λαλέω</b> 26 <b>παρρησιάζομαι</b>	<b>Acts 23: 3 (2)</b> 1 <b>λέγω</b> *11 <b>μαρτυρέω, διαμαρτύρομαι</b>
<b>Acts 5: 8 (7)</b> 20 <b>λαλέω</b> 21 <b>διδάσκω</b> 25 <b>διδάσκω</b> 28 <b>διδάσκω</b> 32 <b>μάρτυς</b> 40 <b>λαλέω</b> *42 <b>εὐαγγελίζομαι, διδάσκω</b>	<b>Acts 11: 6 (5)</b> 4 <b>λέγω</b> 14 <b>λαλέω</b> 15 <b>λαλέω</b> 19 <b>λαλέω</b> *20 <b>εὐαγγελίζομαι, λαλέω</b>	<b>Acts 19: 8 (5)</b> *11 <b>μαρτυρέω, διαμαρτύρομαι</b>	<b>Acts 24: 2 (2)</b> 12 <b>διαλέγομαι</b> 25 <b>διαλέγομαι</b>
<b>Acts 6: 2 (2)</b> 9 <b>συζητέω</b> 10 <b>λαλέω</b>	<b>Acts 12: 1 (1)</b> 25 <b>διακονία</b>	<b>Acts 20: 0 (0)</b> <b>Acts 26: 7 (6)</b> 16 <b>μάρτυς</b> 22 <b>μαρτυρέω</b> 23 <b>καταγγέλλω</b> *25 <b>ἀποφθέγγομαι, φημί</b> 26 <b>παρρησιάζομαι</b> 28 <b>πείθω</b>	<b>Acts 25: 0 (0)</b> <b>Acts 26: 7 (6)</b> 16 <b>μάρτυς</b> 22 <b>μαρτυρέω</b> 23 <b>καταγγέλλω</b> *25 <b>ἀποφθέγγομαι, φημί</b> 26 <b>παρρησιάζομαι</b> 28 <b>πείθω</b>
	<b>Acts 13: 9 (8)</b> 5 <b>καταγγέλλω</b> 15 <b>πράξις</b> 16 <b>λέγω</b> 31 <b>μάρτυς</b> 32 <b>εὐαγγελίζομαι</b> 38 <b>καταγγέλλω</b> 42 <b>λαλέω</b> *46 <b>παρρησιάζομαι, λαλέω</b>	<b>Acts 21: 172 total missional word occurrences in Acts.</b>	<b>Acts 27: 0 (0)</b> <b>Acts 28: 10 (6)</b> 17 <b>λέγω</b> 20 <b>παρακαλέω</b> *23 <b>διαμαρτύρομαι, πείθω, ἐκτίθημι</b> *24 <b>λέγω, πείθω</b> 25 <b>λέγω</b> *31 <b>κηρύσσω, παρρησία</b>
	<i>Note: this table only includes the word occurrences in a missional context.</i>		

### 3.2.1.10 A Closer Examination

Luke employs an extensive missional vocabulary throughout Acts, using one of these 26 words 172 different times in a missional context, in 145 distinct verses. This means that on average there are more than 6 occurrences per chapter. Although many of these words are similar in meaning, each has a slightly different nuance. As a group, they shed light on the missional practices of the early church in Acts, and by using them Luke is also exhorting his readers to imitate the earliest believers and engage in these missional activities.

A closer inspection of these linguistic occurrences yields some fascinating observations. First, Luke is particular about which word he uses, and that they are generally not interchangeable. There are at least 26 verses containing multiple missional words, each of which seems to have a distinct meaning in the overall story. For example, when Paul enters the synagogue in Ephesus, he ‘continued *speaking out boldly* (ἐπαρρησιάζετο) for three months, *reasoning* (διαλεγόμενος) and *persuading* (πείθων) them about the kingdom of God’ (19.8). All three missional practices are essential in this verse. Similarly, when he enters the synagogue in Thessalonica, he ‘*reasoned* (διελέξατο) with them from the Scriptures, *explaining* (διανοίγων) and *giving evidence* (παρατιθέμενος) that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus whom I am *proclaiming* (καταγγέλλω) to you is the Christ.” And some of them were persuaded (ἐπίσθησαν)’ (17.2-4). Here are five distinct missional words, all of which have a different nuance.<sup>134</sup> Noting these distinctions is crucial to understanding Luke’s vividly detailed missional narrative.<sup>135</sup>

There are times when Luke is not as particular, such as when the Athenian philosophers accuse Paul of being, “a *proclaimer* (καταγγελεύς) of strange deities”, because

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<sup>134</sup> Paul does not simply ‘preach’ in Thessalonica, for Luke does not even use εὐαγγελίζομαι, κηρύσσω, or μαρτυρέω. Instead, he reasons/converses (διαλέγομαι), explains (διανοίγω), gives evidence (παρατιθημι), proclaims (καταγγέλλω), and persuades (πείθω) them.

<sup>135</sup> In addition to these two examples, cf. 2.40; 8.25; 20.24; 28.23 for other instances of three missional words in one verse. Cf. 2.4; 4.2,29,31; 5.42; 9.29; 10.42; 11.20; 13.46; 14.3,15; 16.14; 17.18; 18.4,25; 23.11; 28.31 – verses with two missional words. These verses show that there is a clear distinction in meaning for Luke.



he was *preaching* (εὐηγγελίζετο) Jesus and the resurrection' (17.18).<sup>136</sup> But it is vital to observe the actual words Luke uses; they are clues to the specific ideas he is communicating.

The early Christians had a unique missional ethos within the larger culture around them. Their linguistic practices reflect this, for they had a habit of taking a common word, and altering its meaning to accommodate their spiritual and evangelistic purposes. This practice has modified the usage and meaning of many of these words.<sup>137</sup> Other words seem to have some missional connotation before Acts in the LXX (e.g., καταγγέλλω and κηρύσσω).

Most of the identified missional words have a significant LXX background, which certainly influences Luke's understanding of them. However, Luke uses extremely rare words at times (e.g., καταγγελεύς and συζητέω). He also uses multiple words which are unique to Acts in the NT (e.g., καταγγελεύς, ἐκτίθημι and ἀποφθέγγομαι). Many of Luke's missional words are not exclusively evangelistic, but can have multiple connotations (see Table 3.1 above, all words without an asterisk). And finally, most of these words continue to possess a missional meaning after the NT in other early Christian writings.

When the overall distribution of missional words in Acts is examined, these words accurately indicate when missional activity is happening in the narrative. There are only two chapters that do not contain any references, and with good reason: chapter 25 is dominated by the trial narrative, and Festus' interactions with King Agrippa, and chapter 27 is the sailing and shipwreck narrative. Other than these, every chapter contains at least one missional reference. Chapter four is about the power struggle between the authorities and the apostles over their evangelistic preaching, and has the most occurrences, with 14 in 11 verses. Paul's missionary journey narratives also score quite highly, with chapter 17 having 13 references,

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<sup>136</sup> Luke seems to use καταγγέλλω and εὐαγγελίζομαι interchangeably here, and one would be hard pressed to find a distinction in their meaning. The same is true for διαμαρτύρομαι and μαρτυρέω in 23.11.

<sup>137</sup> E.g., εὐαγγέλιον, which had simply been good news, glad tidings, or a reward for good news, but became the gospel message itself, which the early Christians proclaimed (similar for its related words, εὐαγγελίζομαι, εὐαγγελίστης). Also, μάρτυς and related words (μαρτυρέω and μαρτύριον), παρρησία, and διαλέγομαι.

chapter 14 having 10 references, chapters 16 and 13 nine references, chapters 18 and 19 eight references, chapter 20 seven occurrences, and 21 having five occurrences. The Pentecost story in chapter two contains 12 references in nine separate verses, the story of Paul's outreach in Rome in chapter 28 has 10 references in six verses, the missional narrative about Philip and Peter and John in chapter eight contains nine references in seven verses, and the Cornelius episode in chapter 10 contains eight references in seven separate verses. Tracing these missional words accurately leads to the primary missional narratives in Acts.

This leads to the conclusion that there is a direct connection between speaking and mission in Acts. All the missional words in Acts have something to do with speaking, preaching, or proclaiming – for Luke, this is the primary form of mission. This oral understanding encompasses the first two forms of mission that have been identified, public proclamation and person-to-person mission, but not the third, lifestyle evangelism. Luke does advocate lifestyle mission as well in Acts, but much more subtly and less pervasively than the other two types.<sup>138</sup> Though this is not its only connotation, mission primarily means speaking the good news of the gospel in a multitude of different ways in Acts. For Luke, the message must not simply be lived, but also verbally spoken and proclaimed.<sup>139</sup>

### *3.2.2 Narrative Analysis – Missional Episodes in Acts*

Acts is arranged into multiple narrative episodes. These episodes have various themes, such as summaries of the church's inner life, or Paul's conversion story. What are the primary missional narrative episodes in Acts?<sup>140</sup> Though this may be a somewhat subjective analysis, it is a useful exercise in ascertaining the volume and shape of mission in Acts.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Luke does not focus on the inner life of the community, which exempts details about lifestyle mission. What can be deduced about lifestyle mission in Acts will be analyzed in §10.2.3 and relevant sections of part 4.

<sup>139</sup> Luke's view of mission is likely more holistic, but he strongly emphasizes the proclamation aspect in Acts.

<sup>140</sup> This means stories that are primarily missional in nature, or having to do with mission as it has already been defined, the attempt to lead nonbelievers into personal faith in Christ. They need not be exclusively missional, but have mission as a primary theme.

<sup>141</sup> This approach will not provide us with a scientific analysis, but with a useful heuristic tool for analysis.

Acts contains its own internal ‘clues’ as to its intended structure. There are five Lukan summary statements, dotted throughout the narrative, which delineate the six major narrative ‘panels’.<sup>142</sup> Each of these six larger narrative ‘panels’ contains multiple smaller ‘sections’,<sup>143</sup> and within those sections are the individual narrative ‘episodes’. Each of the panels has a missional theme at its core, all moving outwards as the Gospel moves from Jerusalem to Rome. But do the individual episodes also bear out this theme? Answering this question is the best way to quantify mission in Acts narratively. This process will also provide a useful outline of the Acts narrative.

The following outline identifies the narrative episodes within Acts, using textual clues within the text itself.<sup>144</sup> Each episode is classified according to its missional content, with four basic possibilities, and assigned a point system for analytical purposes:<sup>145</sup>

- Missional (the episode’s explicit theme is mission – 3 points)
- Partially missional (mission is one of multiple themes – 2 points)
- Indirectly missional (the episode affects or is affected by mission indirectly – 1 point)<sup>146</sup>
- Not missional (there is no missional connection – 0 points).

**Table 3.3 A Narrative Outline of The Acts of the Apostles: From Jerusalem to Rome**

<b>I. The Primitive Church in Jerusalem (1.1-6.7)</b>			
1.	Introduction (1.1-26)		
	A. (1) Prologue & Recapitulation (1.1-14)	[1.7-8]	{2}
	B. (2) The Rhetoric of Replacement (1.15-26)		{0}
2.	Pentecost: The Medium, the Message, & the Manifestations (2.1-47)		
	A. (3) Power at Pentecost (2.1-13)	[2.8-11]	{3}
	B. (4) Preaching at Pentecost (2.14-41)	[2.40-41]	{3}
	C. (5) The People of Pentecost (2.42-47)	[2.47]	{2}

<sup>142</sup> The panels are as follows (with summary statements): 1) Jerusalem (6.7); 2) Judea and Samaria (9.31); 3) Gospel to the Gentiles (12.24); 4) Asia (16.5); 5) Europe (19.20); 6) To Rome. J. B. Polhill, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Nashville: Broadman, 1992): 72ff. Other scholars have highlighted these sections as well. Note the clear geographical pattern of expansion.

<sup>143</sup> These sometimes correspond to the actual chapters of Acts, but often they do not. The modern chapter and verse divisions are not a part of the original text.

<sup>144</sup> The goal is to attempt to see the structure of Acts as Luke might have seen it. Some of the (creative) section titles and names are from Witherington, *Acts*, v-ix, although the particular outline is unique to this work.

<sup>145</sup> Note the color codes. The evidence for each missional category classification is included in brackets [], and any citation is the primary missional portion of the episode. The numbers in curly brackets {} on the far right represent the points allotted to each episode.

<sup>146</sup> The ‘indirectly missional’ episodes are explained and justified in footnotes, as this is in many ways the most difficult classification to make. This ranking of missional episodes is a somewhat subjective process, and one could argue particularly about the indirectly missional episodes, but it does provide us with concrete figures to work with, which is the goal of this narrative analysis.



- |    |  |                        |     |
|----|--|------------------------|-----|
| 3. | The Mighty Work, the Mighty Word, the Mighty Ones (3.1-4.22) |                        |     |
|    | A. (6) The Mighty Work (3.1-10)                              | [3.6-10]               | {3} |
|    | B. (7) The Mighty Word (3.11-26)                             | [3.12,19]              | {3} |
|    | C. (8) The Mighty Ones (4.1-22)                              | [4.8-12]               | {3} |
| 4. | Prayer, Possessions, Persecution, & Proclamation (4.23-6.7)  |                        |     |
|    | A. (9) Prayer & Power (4.23-31)                              | [4.29-31]              | {3} |
|    | B. (10) The Community of Goods (4.32-37)                     | [4.33]                 | {2} |
|    | C. (11) Ananias & Sapphira (5.1-11)                          |                        | {0} |
|    | D. (12) The Sum of the Matter (5.12-16)                      | [5.14]                 | {3} |
|    | E. (13) Portents & Persecutions (5.17-42)                    | [5.28-32]              | {2} |
|    | F. (14) The Seven Servants (6.1-6)                           | [6.2,4] <sup>147</sup> | {1} |

*Summary i (6.7) 'The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.'*

## II. Outreach in Judea & Samaria (6.8-9.31)

- |    |  |                         |     |
|----|--|-------------------------|-----|
| 1. | Stephen on Trial (6.8-8.3)                 |                         |     |
|    | A. (15) Stephen's Trial (6.8-15)           | [6.10]                  | {3} |
|    | B. (16) Stephen's Testimony (7.1-53)       | [7.2,49-53]             | {3} |
|    | C. (17) Stephen's Termination (7.54-8.3)   | [6.8-10] <sup>148</sup> | {1} |
| 2. | Philip on the Fringes of Judaism (8.4-40)  |                         |     |
|    | A. (18) Surprise in Samaria (8.4-25)       | [8.4-6,12-13,25]        | {3} |
|    | B. (19) Philip & a Unique Eunuch (8.26-40) | [8.35-38]               | {3} |
| 3. | Saul, the Salient Jewish Convert (9.1-30)  |                         |     |
|    | A. (20) The Assaulting of Saul (9.1-19a)   | [9.15] <sup>149</sup>   | {1} |
|    | B. (21) Saul's Early Efforts (9.19b-30)    | [9.20-22,28]            | {3} |

*Summary ii (9.31) 'So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.'*

## III. The Gospel to the Gentiles (9.32-12.24)

- |    |  |                           |     |
|----|--|---------------------------|-----|
| 1. | The Petrine Passages (9.32-11.18)                      |                           |     |
|    | A. (22) Peter the Healer (9.32-43)                     | [9.34-35]                 | {3} |
|    | B. (23) Two Pivotal Visions (10.1-23)                  | [10.13-15] <sup>150</sup> | {1} |
|    | C. (24) Revival at Cornelius' House (10.24-48)         | [10.44-48]                | {3} |
|    | D. (25) Peter's Report in Jerusalem (11.1-18)          | [11.17-18] <sup>151</sup> | {1} |
| 2. | A Tale of Two Cities (11.19-12.23)                     |                           |     |
|    | A. (26) Christians & Collections at Antioch (11.19-30) | [11.19-20]                | {2} |
|    | B. (27) Rescue & Retribution in Jerusalem (12.1-23)    |                           | {0} |

*Summary iii (12.24) 'But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied.'*

## IV. Expansion into Asia – The Door to the Gentiles Opens Wide (12.25-16.5)

- |    |  |                              |     |
|----|--|------------------------------|-----|
| 1. | The First Missionary Journey (12.25-14.28)                           |                              |     |
|    | A. (28) Antioch: The Launching Pad (12.25-13.4)                      | [3.2,3]                      | {3} |
|    | B. (29) In Cyprus & Pisidian Antioch (13.5-52)                       | [13.5,16,48-49]              | {3} |
|    | C. (30) In Iconium, Lystra, & Derbe (14.1-28)                        | [14.1,21]                    | {3} |
| 2. | The Jerusalem Council (15.1-35)                                      |                              |     |
|    | A. (31) The Great Debate (15.1-21)                                   | [15.4-6] <sup>152</sup>      | {1} |
|    | B. (32) The Great Decision (15.21-35)                                | [15.28-35] <sup>153</sup>    | {1} |
| 3. | Making a Second Effort – The Second Missionary Journey (15.36-18.34) |                              |     |
|    | A. (33) Disagreement with Barnabas (15.36-40)                        |                              | {0} |
|    | B. (34) Back to Galatia (15.41-16.4)                                 | [15.41; 16.4] <sup>154</sup> | {1} |

*Summary iv (16.5) 'So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.'*

<sup>147</sup> The resolution frees the apostles to devote themselves to mission.

<sup>148</sup> Stephen is captured and killed partially because of his missional success.

<sup>149</sup> Saul's Damascus Road conversion has a massive indirect impact on the mission of the early church.

<sup>150</sup> The Gentile mission is opening up to Peter in these visions.

<sup>151</sup> This report to the Jerusalem authorities clearly affects the future mission of the early church.

<sup>152</sup> The Jerusalem Council is necessary because of missional developments, esp. the mission to the Gentiles.

<sup>153</sup> The Council's decision directly affects future mission.

<sup>154</sup> Strengthening the churches and delivering the Council's decree would affect their mission indirectly.



## V. European Mission (and a return to Ephesus) (16.6-19.20)

- |   |                              |     |
|---|------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Into Europe (16.6-18.23)   |                              |     |
| A. (35) The Macedonian Call (16.6-10)                                     | [16.9-10] <sup>155</sup>     | {1} |
| B. (36) Establishment & Imprisonment In Philippi (16.11-40)               | [16.14,30-34]                | {3} |
| C. (37) Faith & Controversy in Thessalonica & Berea (17.1-14)             | [17.2-4,12]                  | {3} |
| D. (38) Proclaiming the Unknown at Athens (17.15-34)                      | [17.17,22,34]                | {3} |
| E. (39) Congregating at Corinth (18.1-18)                                 | [18.4-5,11]                  | {3} |
| F. (40) Reporting Back, Strengthening the Churches (18.19-23)             | [18.19,22-23] <sup>156</sup> | {1} |
| 2. The Third Journey Begins (18.24-19.20)                                 |                              |     |
| A. (41) The Ephesus Chronicles – Part 1: Apollos (18.24-28)               | [18.26-28]                   | {2} |
| B. (42) The Ephesus Chronicles – Part 2: The Baptist's Disciples (19.1-7) | [19. 5]                      | {3} |
| C. (43) The Ephesus Chronicles – Part 3: Miracles & Magic (19.8-19)       | [19.8,17-20]                 | {3} |

**Summary v (19.20) 'So the word of the Lord was growing mightily & prevailing.'**<sup>157</sup>

## VI. Towards Rome – Trial, Travel, & Tribulation (19.21-28.31)

- |  |                           |     |
|--|---------------------------|-----|
| 1. A Dramatic Return (19.21-21.17)                                       |                           |     |
| A. (44) The Ephesus Chronicles – Part 4: Riot in Ephesus (19.21-41)      | [19.26] <sup>158</sup>    | {1} |
| B. (45) Final Tour of Duty (20.1-16)                                     | [20.2] <sup>159</sup>     | {1} |
| C. (46) Paul's Farewell Address (20.17-38)                               | [20.21-24]                | {2} |
| D. (47) Journey to Jerusalem (21.1-16)                                   |                           | {0} |
| 2. The Trials of Paul (21.17-26.32)                                      |                           |     |
| A. (48) In Church & Temple (21.17-26)                                    |                           | {0} |
| B. (49) Purity & Profanity in the Temple (21.27-36)                      | [21.28] <sup>160</sup>    | {1} |
| C. (50) The First Defense (21.37-22.29)                                  | [22.15,21] <sup>161</sup> | {1} |
| D. (51) The Hearing Before the Sanhedrin (22.30-23.11)                   | [23.11]                   | {2} |
| E. (52) The Plot & the Plan (23.12-35)                                   |                           | {0} |
| F. (53) Paul's Trial Before Felix (24.1-27)                              | [24.24-25]                | {2} |
| G. (54) An Appealing Time with Festus (25.1-12)                          |                           | {0} |
| H. (55) A Royal Visit (25.13-27)   |                           | {0} |
| I. (56) Hearing the Last Witness (26.1-32)                               | [26.16-29]                | {2} |
| 3. The Journey to Rome (27.1-28.12)                                      |                           |     |
| A. (57) Faring Well until Fair Havens (27.1-12)                          |                           | {0} |
| B. (58) Storm & Shipwreck (27.13-44)                                     |                           | {0} |
| C. (59) Hospitality & Healing on Malta (28.1-11)                         | [28.8-10]                 | {2} |
| 4. All Roads Lead to... (28.12-31)                                       |                           |     |
| A. (60) Journey's End (28.12-16)   |                           | {0} |
| B. (61) Paul & the Roman Jewish Leaders: The First Encounter (28.17-22)  | [28.20] <sup>162</sup>    | {1} |
| C. (62) Paul & the Roman Jewish Leaders: The Second Encounter (28.23-28) | [28.23-24]                | {3} |
| D. (63) Paul's Ministry in Rome (28.30-31)                               | [28.31]                   | {3} |

The above information is summarized in the following table, which creates a 'missional percentage' for each panel, and for the overall text of Acts {total points}.<sup>163</sup>

<sup>155</sup> This leads to a watershed in early Christian missions – the entry into Europe.

<sup>156</sup> Strengthening the churches, and bringing the report back to Antioch would have indirectly affected mission.

<sup>157</sup> 19.10 is significant as a missional geographical milestone and transition point – 'all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.'

<sup>158</sup> Paul's missionary activity causes the Ephesian riot.

<sup>159</sup> Building up the churches – we can assume an aspect of Paul's 'exhortations' to them is missional.

<sup>160</sup> Paul's missional outreach causes the riot.

<sup>161</sup> Paul testifies about his evangelistic calling, and this incites the crowd.

<sup>162</sup> This is an initial evangelistic contact with the Jewish Roman leaders, which leads to explicit missional interactions in their next meeting.

<sup>163</sup> The missional percentage is determined by using the assigned point system, and comparing the points a panel actually earned to the total number of points it could have earned, were it 'completely missional'. So, for example, if a panel has 3 missional episodes (3x3=9), 2 partially missional (2x2=4), 4 indirectly missional



**Table 3.4 Narrative Concentration of Mission in Acts**

Missional Quantities in Acts	1. Jerusalem 1.1-6.7	2. Judea & Samaria 6.8-9.31	3. Gentiles 9.32-12.24	4. Asia 12.25-16.5	5. Europe 16.6-19.20	6. Rome 19.21-28.31	Total in Acts {points}
Missional Episodes	7 {21}	5 {15}	2 {6}	3 {9}	6 {18}	2 {6}	25 {75}
Partially Missional	4 {8}	0 {0}	1 {2}	0 {0}	1 {2}	5 {10}	11 {22}
Indirectly Missional	1 {1}	2 {2}	2 {2}	3 {3}	2 {2}	5 {5}	15 {15}
Non-Missional	2 {0}	0 {0}	1 {0}	1 {0}	0 {0}	8 {0}	12 {0}
Total Episodes	14	7	6	7	9	20	63
Total Points	30	17	10	12	22	21	112
Possible Points	42	21	18	21	27	60	189
Missional Percentage	71.43%	80.95%	55.56%	57.14%	81.48%	35.00%	<u>59.26%</u>

The following table briefly explains why the narrative panels score as they do:<sup>164</sup>

**Table 3.5 Narrative Panels in Acts (in order of missional concentration)**

Outreach in Europe (16.6-19.20) – **81.48%** (22 out of 27 possible points)

*Extremely high missional concentration* – there are few interruptions to the mission theme in this portion.

Outreach in Judea and Samaria (6.8-9.31) – **80.95%** (17 out of 21 possible points)

*Extremely high missional concentration* – contains nearly uninterrupted outreach.

Outreach in Jerusalem (1.1-6.7) – **71.43%** (30 out of 42 possible points)

*High missional concentration* – there is an explosion of mission in the first chapters, but there are other non-missional issues to address as well, such as the inner life of the community (2.42-47; 4.32-37), replacing Judas (1.15-26), Ananias and Sapphira (5.1-11), and the choosing of the Seven (6.1-6).

Outreach in Asia (12.25-16.5) – **57.14%** (12 out of 21 possible points)

*Moderate missional concentration* – mostly missional themes, but contains the Jerusalem Council (15.1-35), and the disagreement with Barnabas (15.36-40).

Gentile Outreach (9.32-12.24) – **55.56%** (10 out of 18 possible points)

*Moderate missional concentration* – mission is still the overriding theme, but contains two accounts of the Cornelius episode (10.1-11.18 – this has its own missional relevance), and the Herod drama (12.1-12).

Towards Rome (19.21-28.31) – **35.00%** (21 out of 60 possible points)

*Minimal missional concentration* – this is the only panel in which mission is not the primary theme. Instead, it is dominated by Paul’s trials, travels, and shipwreck (chapters 25 and 27 have no missional content at all).

If the sixth section is removed, which contains less direct missional activity, the cumulative missional percentage of the first five sections is 70.54%. The vast majority of Acts has a surprisingly high narrative missional concentration, but Luke changes his focus at the end.

(4x1=4), and three non-missional (3x0=0), it would have a total score of 17 (9+4+4+0), out of a total possible of 36 (12 episodes x 3 possible points each), which would give it a missional percentage of 47.22% (17/36).

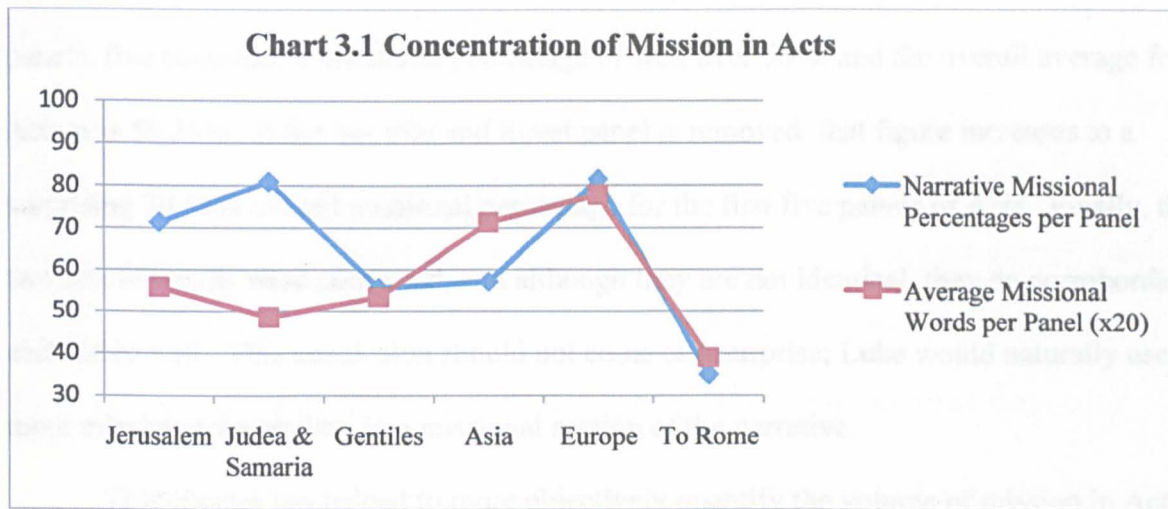
<sup>164</sup> Missional percentage rating: 80-100% should be considered an extremely high missional concentration, 60-80% is highly concentrated, 40-60% is moderately concentrated, and 0-40% is minimally concentrated.

### 3.2.3 Comparing the Results

Measuring the volume of mission in Acts has produced some revealing data. Having identified the narrative panels of Acts, the previous linguistic data can be arranged into those categories, examining the average number of missional words per episode in each panel.

**Table 3.6 Narrative Panels in Acts (in order of average missional words per episode)**

EUROPE (16.6-19.20) 35 words/9 episodes	<b>3.89</b> missional words per episode
ASIA (12.25-16.5) 25 words/7 episodes	<b>3.57</b> missional words per episode
JERUSALEM (1.1-6.7) 39 words/14 episodes	<b>2.79</b> missional words per episode
GENTILES (9.32-12.24) 16 words/6 episodes	<b>2.67</b> missional words per episode
JUDEA & SAMARIA (6.8-9.31) 17 words/7 episodes	<b>2.43</b> missional words per episode
ROME (19.21-28.31) 39 words/20 episodes	<b>1.95</b> missional words per episode



The numbers correspond fairly well to one another.<sup>165</sup> The actual comparative rankings are not identical; the main discrepancy seems to be Judea and Samaria, which scores a close second in the narrative analysis, but a distant fifth in the linguistic ranking.<sup>166</sup> However, the overall patterns are similar, and the actual numbers are compatible. This corroborates both sets of data as reliable indicators of the volume and concentration of mission in Acts.

<sup>165</sup> The missional words per episode have been multiplied by a constant factor of 20, to put the figures in a similar numerical range, so they can be graphed more effectively, and the relative comparisons can be shown.

<sup>166</sup> Luke deliberately includes many more missional words in the Pauline mission (Asia and Europe) than in other parts of Acts, even when those sections are comparably missional in nature. This may be a rhetorical attempt to highlight Paul's evangelistic activity as the high point and ideal to be imitated in Acts (cf. part 4).



### **3.3 Conclusion – A Missional Narrative**

A definition of mission was established in the first section of this chapter. Then two methods of quantifying mission were developed in the second section: a linguistic measure, and a narrative assessment. 26 different ‘missional words’ used in Acts were identified and examined, and 172 explicitly missional occurrences of those 26 words were recorded, distributed fairly evenly throughout the text. This equals an average of 6.14 occurrences per chapter, and gives a feel for the volume of missional vocabulary in Acts.

In the third section of this chapter, narrative episodes were identified, and percentages of missional concentration for each of six narrative panels in Acts were derived. Of the six panels, five contained a missional percentage of well over 50%, and the overall average for Acts was 59.26%. If the last trial and travel panel is removed, that figure increases to a surprising 70.54% overall missional percentage for the first five panels of Acts. Finally, the two sets of results were compared, and although they are not identical, they do corroborate each other well. This conclusion should not come as a surprise; Luke would naturally use more missional vocabulary in a missional section of the narrative.

This chapter has helped to more objectively quantify the volume of mission in Acts, both its frequency, and its distribution. It has also revealed Luke’s primary missional vocabulary and activity, and identified primary missional areas of the narrative. The result of the examination is evident: mission is a massive theme in Acts. In fact, it is appropriate to say that missional activity is *the* theme of Acts, more so than any other aspect of the text. Acts is saturated with mission, and is at its core a missional text.

The rhetorical function of such an abundance of missional language and activity in Acts is obvious: Luke is strongly emphasizing how missional the earliest church was. By implication, he is urging his readers, and his church, to follow suit, and adopt similar missional mindsets and practices. This will be examined more closely in part two.



## PART 2 – MISSIONAL STIMULUS IN ACTS

*Suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting...They were all filled with the Holy Spirit...Peter said to them, 'Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit' ...So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls... Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

-Acts 2.2,4,38,41,46,47 (NASB)

Acts' account of the early church is compelling. The triumph of the Word, spurred on by the power of the unpredictable Spirit, makes for an entertaining narrative, full of action and suspense. What does Luke claim empowered the early church to live as it did? How did a regional band of Christ-followers based in the frontier city of Jerusalem establish their religion in the most influential cities of the Empire within a few short generations? And why did they do it, what was their motivation? These questions are at the heart of the book of Acts, and the focus of part two: the missional stimuli of the early church in Acts.

### CHAPTER 4 – THE EXPANSION OF THE DIVINE ΛΟΓΟΣ

Marguerat claims that, 'The theme of Acts is neither the history of the Church, nor the activity of the Spirit, but the expansion of the Word. The real hero of the Acts of the Apostles is the λόγος, the Word.'<sup>1</sup> The word λόγος occurs 65 total times in Acts, of which at least 41 refer to Christ, the divine λόγος.<sup>2</sup> The volume of references to this concept indicates its importance to the life and advancement of the Christian mission in Luke's mind.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Marguerat, *Historian*, 37. Most commentators recognize Luke's focus on the spread of the gospel, or as he calls it, 'the word of God (the Lord)'; cf. 4.31; 8.14,25; 11.1; 13.5,7,44,46,48; 16.32; 17.13; 18.11. E.g., Barrett, 'A quick reading of the text confirms the picture of progressive expansion [introduced in 1.8]', *Acts*, 1.49.

<sup>2</sup> 2.41; 4.4,29,31; 6.2,4,7; 8.4,14,25; 10.36,44; 11.1,19; 12.24; 13.5,7,26,44,46,48,49; 14.3,12,25; 15.7,15,32,35,36; 16.6,32; 17.11,13; 18.11; 19.10,20; 20.2,7,24,32. The others 24 occurrences of λόγος refer to peoples' words: 1.1; 2.22,40; 5.5,24; 6.5; 7.22,29; 8.21; 10.29; 11.22; 13.15; 15.6,24,27; 16.36; 18.5,14,15;

## 4.1 The Activity of the Λόγος

### 4.1.1 The Active Word

The λόγος is extremely active in Acts. At Pentecost (Acts 2) the Holy Spirit initiates the preaching and dispersion of the Word.<sup>4</sup> From this event forward, the missionaries become witnesses of a Word which they must recognize and follow. Throughout Acts, the Word precedes the witnesses, acting upon them, rather than being acted upon by them. For example, in Acts 13.44-49 the people assemble to hear (ἀκοῦσαι) the word (not the messengers), the word is spoken (λαληθῆναι), the word is glorified (ἐδόξαζον), and the word spreads (διεφέρετο) through the whole region. In Acts, the λόγος takes on a life of its own.

The Word engages in multiple activities.<sup>5</sup> The Word ‘grows/proliferates’ (αὐξάνω, 6.7; 12.24; 19.20). The Word ‘spread throughout the whole region’ (διεφέρετο δὲ ὁ λόγος τοῦ Κυρίου δι’ ὅλης τῆς χώρας, 13.49). Paul is ‘possessed’ by the Word (συνέχω, 18.5).<sup>6</sup> People ‘receive’ the Word (δέχομαι, ἀποδέχομαι, 2.41; 8.14; 11.1; 17.11), and even ‘praise/glorify’ the Word (δοξάζω, 13.48). These describe the Word as a personal being with an active will.<sup>7</sup>

A significant part of the Word’s activity in Acts is its travel. Pao dissects the itinerary of the Word of God, and concludes that its journey in Acts is ‘one of conquest as the word prevails in the midst of opposing forces.’<sup>8</sup> Additionally, the journey of the Word is linear, from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth (i.e., the Gentile world), as opposed to the circular travels of the ministers of the word.<sup>9</sup>

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19.38,40; 20.35,38; 22.22.. It is sometimes difficult to make this distinction, e.g., 2.41. ‘Ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ appears 11 times, ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου appears 10 times; other important phrases include: ὁ λόγος τῆς σωτηρίας (13.26), τῷ λόγῳ τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ (14.3; 20.32), and τὸν λόγον τοῦ εὐαγγελίου (15.7).

<sup>3</sup> Pao, *Isaianic*, 148, contrasts λόγος with ῥῆμα in Acts, concluding that they are not synonymous, but that Luke uses λόγος in a special sense as a reference to the word of God throughout Acts.

<sup>4</sup> See the following chapter for the relation between the Word and the Spirit.

<sup>5</sup> This chapter generally follows and expands upon Marguerat’s analysis of the Word in Acts, *Historian*, 37-40.

<sup>6</sup> Συνέχω can also be translated as seized or pressed, as when a person is gripped by, or devoted to, something.

<sup>7</sup> Pao calls the way Luke personifies the λόγος ‘the hypostatization of the Word’ in Acts, *Isaianic*, 160-67.

<sup>8</sup> Pao, *Isaianic*, 156.

<sup>9</sup> Pao, *Isaianic*, 150-56. The Isaianic roots of this are Isa 2.2-4; 40.9; 45.22-24; 55.10-11.

#### 4.1.2 *The Triumphant Word*

The Word is not simply active in Acts; it is also impossible to control or hinder. The conflict with the religious leaders in Jerusalem (Acts 3-5) is about who controls the Word (4.1,18), and Luke 'ironically exposes the helplessness of the adversaries to censure it (24.1-4,17; 5.17-28,40)'.<sup>10</sup> In both Jerusalem (4.23-31) and Philippi (16.19-26) the apostles are jailed for preaching the Word, and both attempts are futile against the earth-quaking power of God. Similarly, Paul's imprisonment in Rome does not prevent his bold and persuasive preaching (μετά πάσης παρρησίας ἀκωλύτως, 28.31).<sup>11</sup> Luke is emphasizing that the advance and activity of the Word is impossible to contain; ensured by God's providence, its eventual triumph is inevitable. This is the central theme of Acts.<sup>12</sup>

#### 4.1.3 *The Suffering Messengers of the Word*

The Word's triumph in Acts does not imply the triumphant well-being of its bearers;<sup>13</sup> in fact, the opposite is the case.<sup>14</sup> The success of the word usually comes in the context of the suffering of its messengers, and even because of their suffering. This highlights another theme of Acts: providential failure.<sup>15</sup> Each of the three references in Acts to the growth and

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<sup>10</sup> Marguerat, *Historian*, 37.

<sup>11</sup> See Marguerat, *Historian*, 37, for more on the futile attempts to control the Word in Acts.

<sup>12</sup> It is related to a second theme in Acts, which is the providence of God. God's providence assures the Word's triumph, Squires, *Plan of God*, 37-77.

<sup>13</sup> E. Käsemann, *Der Ruf der Freiheit*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1972): 207-22, claimed that Luke had exchanged Paul's theology of the cross, of life working through death (cf. Rom 6.6-8; Gal 2.19-20; 2 Cor 12.9-10), for a theology of glory or triumphalism, supporting this with the observation that in Luke-Acts the resurrection and not the cross is central in salvation. See also H. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, G. Buswell, trans. (London: Faber, 1969): 210: 'there is no trace of any passion mysticism, nor is any direct soteriological significance drawn from Jesus' suffering or death.' Cf. the summary of this scholarly argument in S. Cunningham, *Through Many Tribulations': The Theology of Persecution in Luke-Acts*, JSNT.SS 142 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997): 16-17, no. 13, who cites multiple scholars who conclude that there is a theology of the cross in Luke-Acts, though it is different than Paul's.

<sup>14</sup> B. R. Gaventa, 'Towards a Theology of Acts: Reading and Rereading', *Interp* 42 (1988): 146-57, first opposed Käsemann's view, highlighting the suffering of the messengers of the word, whose experience is not triumphant. Many other exegetes have also demonstrated the fallacy in Käsemann's argument.

<sup>15</sup> E.g., the scattering of the Christians in Jerusalem (8.1b-4) has a positive effect on the spreading of the Word in Samaria (8.5), and results in the evangelization of the Gentiles in Antioch (11.19-21); Paul's appeal to the emperor in order to avoid injustice results in the apostle's witness to the Word in the capital of the Empire (25.11-28.31). In each case, God sovereignly ordains failure and suffering as a vehicle for the proclamation of the word. This theme has been developed in Cunningham, *Through Many Tribulations*.

expansion of the word occur on the day after a crisis.<sup>16</sup> ‘Threatened, beaten, betrayed, judged, imprisoned and stoned, the messengers do not ensure the advancement of the Word *in spite of* the bad things that happen to them, but *because of* them.’<sup>17</sup>

This is a pattern in the Acts narrative. At Lystra, Paul heals a paralyzed man and then is stoned and left for dead (14.19). In Philippi, Paul and Silas exorcise a demon from the ‘pythoness’ slave girl, only to be put in prison (16.16-40).<sup>18</sup> God’s protection of his messengers does not spare them from failure, humiliation or martyrdom (7.54-60); as the word advances, its bearers suffer.<sup>19</sup> This theme is emphasized by Paul’s calling: ‘He is a chosen instrument of mine, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for *I will show him how much he must suffer (παθεῖν) for my name's sake*’ (9.15-16).

Marguerat summarizes this point: ‘Rather than a triumphal path, the route of the heralds of the Word is the road of the cross. According to Luke, this is the frame in which witness takes place.’<sup>20</sup> In Acts, the Word irrepressibly triumphs, its witnesses suffer on the road of the cross, and the sovereignty of God in it all is unquestionable. The bearers of the Word must walk the way of the cross, the way of Christ, even as the mission advances.

#### 4.1.4 The Isaianic Roots of the Λόγος

D. W. Pao has claimed that to fully understand Acts, one must understand the OT background of the Exodus tradition as reinterpreted in Isaiah, and that this is particularly true for the λόγος in Acts.<sup>21</sup> Three foundational passages about the word in Isaiah 40-55 illustrate this

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<sup>16</sup> 6.7 is after the crisis caused by the neglect of the widows; 12.24 concludes the killing of James, and the imprisonment of Peter; 19.20 concludes the persecution-filled ministry of Paul in Corinth and Ephesus.

<sup>17</sup> Marguerat, *Historian*, 39.

<sup>18</sup> Evangelization in Act often culminates in the violent rejection of the missionary, e.g., in Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth, and Ephesus (Acts 17-19). Yet the word continues to expand.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. B. Rapske, ‘Opposition to the Plan of God and Persecution’, *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, I. H. Marshall, D. Peterson, eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998): 235-56, who itemizes the sources of persecution and opposition in Acts, and demonstrates how they all reveal ‘the principle that if it is of God, it will be invincible’, 254.

<sup>20</sup> Marguerat, *Historian*, 40.

<sup>21</sup> Pao, *Isaianic*, 5: ‘The scriptural story which provides the hermeneutical framework for Acts is none other than the foundation story of Exodus as developed and transformed through the Isaianic corpus...in the development of the identity of the early Christian movement, the appropriation of ancient Israel’s foundation story provides

connection: ‘The grass withers, the flower fades, but the *word* of our God will stand forever’ (Isa. 40.8); ‘By myself I have sworn, from my mouth has gone forth in righteousness a *word* that shall not return: “To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear” (45.23); ‘For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my *word* be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it (Isa. 55.10-11, the epilogue of Isa. 40-55).<sup>22</sup> Each of these strongly emphasizes the power and supremacy of the word of God.

There are clear resonances here with the word of the Lord in Acts, which inexorably accomplishes the divine will ‘with power/might/vigour’ (*κατὰ κράτος*, 19.20).<sup>23</sup> The word in Acts travels to the end of the earth, with a two-fold goal: ‘to conquer the world and to create a community as the true people of God.’<sup>24</sup> As Pao emphasizes: ‘Themes such as the journey of the word, the nature of the word, the growth of the word-community, and the identity of the word-community as the people of God can be properly understood only against the context of the Exodus traditions as transformed in Isaiah 40-55.’<sup>25</sup>

## ***4.2 The Three-Fold Nature of the Λόγος***

### ***4.2.1 Christological***

The word is first a Christological phenomenon in Acts.<sup>26</sup> For this reason, it can be referred to as the divine λόγος. The parallel with John’s theology of the pre-incarnate Word is fascinating (cf. Jn 1.1-14). Yet Lucan theology is probably different from Johannine

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grounds for a claim by the early Christian community to be the true people of God.’ Many other scholars have also recognized these important connections.

<sup>22</sup> Pao, *Isaianic*, 48-49. Cf. also Isa. 2.2-4.

<sup>23</sup> This phrase should probably be understood as a militaristic conquest statement, Pao, *Isaianic*, 162-63. ‘The word of God should be understood as the main character in the narrative of Acts’, 49.

<sup>24</sup> Pao, *Isaianic*, 176.

<sup>25</sup> Pao, *Isaianic*, 176; see 145-80 for the details of Pao’s comprehensive and convincing arguments.

<sup>26</sup> For a review of books (15) and articles (150) on Luke’s Christology, see Bovon, *Luke*, 123-223, 532-36.

theology: 'For Luke, the word of God was made flesh in Jesus, but not in John's manner: it is the word of God, the word in the past addressed to the *prophets* and not pre-existent in heaven, which took on a body in Jesus (Acts 10.36f).'<sup>27</sup> Luke understands the divine word to be the continuation of the OT words of the prophets (esp. Isaiah), embodied and fulfilled in Jesus, and now continuing its activity among his followers, the church.<sup>28</sup> For Luke, the *λόγος* is the story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, the present-day activity of the risen Christ in the world, and the fulfillment of all that the prophets of old had spoken of. This is why its victory is so imperative – the triumph of the Word is the triumph of Christ himself.

#### 4.2.2 Ecclesiological

The Word is also an ecclesiological concept for Luke.<sup>29</sup> Throughout Acts, 'the growth of the Word is co-extensive with that of the Church.'<sup>30</sup> When Luke speaks of the Word spreading (6.7; 12.24; 19.20), he is actually referring to the numerical growth of the church.<sup>31</sup> The same verb, *πληθύνω*, which implies proliferation and growth, is used for both the *λόγος* (12.24) and the church (6.1,7; 9.31).<sup>32</sup> The growth of the Word personifies the growth of the church; just as a seed possesses the power of growth, so 'the word has in itself the power of life... This independent force of the word of God makes it the preeminent instrument of salvation.'<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Bovon, *Luke*, 222. There is overlap between these conceptions of the word. The Johannine tradition likely received its pneumatology from the OT prophetic word, 'the word of the Lord', as did Luke.

<sup>28</sup> In Acts 10.36-43 Luke summarizes his understanding of *λόγος*: 'The word (*τὸν λόγον*) which he sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ... You know of *Jesus of Nazareth*, how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. *We are witnesses* of all the things he did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put him to death by hanging him on a cross. God raised him up on the third day and granted that he become visible... And he ordered us to *preach* to the people, and solemnly to *testify* that this is the one who has been appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead. *Of him all the prophets bear witness* that through his name everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins.'

<sup>29</sup> See J. Kodell, "'The Word of God Grew": The Ecclesial Tendency of ΛΟΓΟΣ in Acts 1.7; 12.24; 19.20', *Bib* 55 (1974): 505-19.

<sup>30</sup> Marguerat, *Historian*, 38.

<sup>31</sup> This phrase 'Ο *λόγος* τοῦ Θεοῦ *ἤξανε* (6.7; 12.24; 19.20), used to summarize church growth, has been a 'perennial source of puzzlement for translators and interpreters', Kodell, 'The Word', 505.

<sup>32</sup> Marguerat, *Historian*, 38.

<sup>33</sup> Kodell, 'The Word', 506.

The Word's primary goal in Acts is the creation of the new community of the people of God, in the Isaianic Exodus tradition.<sup>34</sup> Luke views the Word and the church as interchangeable, at least as far as their irresistible growth is concerned.<sup>35</sup> 'The community is the word as it testifies to the power and salvation of the God of Israel.'<sup>36</sup> This highlights the inseparable nature of Christ and his church in Lukan theology (9.1,5).<sup>37</sup> For Luke, Christ and his church are one, brought together by his theological understanding of the divine λόγος.

#### 4.2.3 Missional

Finally, λόγος is also a message to be proclaimed, and a mission to be carried out.<sup>38</sup> When the Holy Spirit fills the disciples, they are empowered to 'speak the word of God with great boldness' (4.31). When they are scatted by persecution, they 'went about preaching the word wherever they went' (8.4). When they reach Salamis (and other destinations), they 'proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues' (13.5). In this sense, the Word and the message of the gospel are identical to Luke. He explicitly joins the two concepts when Peter refers to τὸν λόγον τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, 'the Word of the gospel' (15.7).<sup>39</sup> Throughout Acts believers are defined by their acceptance of the Word (8.14; 11.1; 17.11; cf. Lk 8.13), and are called 'hearers of the Word' (13.7,44; 15.7).<sup>40</sup> Luke announces this missional understanding of the Word as a message to be proclaimed and received by believing in the parable of the sower (Lk 8.5-15),<sup>41</sup> and this continues throughout the rest of Luke-Acts.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Pao, *Isaianic*, 167-71. This community is also the sole possessor of the Word, as their inheritance 171-76.

<sup>35</sup> For the interchangeable growth of the church and the Word throughout Acts, cf. 2.42; 5.14; 6.1,7; 9.31; 11.21; 12.24; 13.49; 16.5; 18.10; 19.20.

<sup>36</sup> Pao, *Isaianic*, 170.

<sup>37</sup> Acts 9.1 states that Saul was persecuting the church, Jesus' disciples, and yet in 9.5 Jesus says Saul was persecuting him. Jesus and his church are one and the same throughout Acts: 'Distinctive to Luke's account is the identification of the risen Lord with the community... Luke could scarcely have found a more effective way of establishing the living relationship and presence of the raised prophet with those who continued to live and speak and act with his prophetic spirit', Johnson, *Acts*, 168.

<sup>38</sup> This is the most natural meaning of 'word', an intelligible spoken message.

<sup>39</sup> In 20.24 Paul summarizes his ministry: 'to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God' (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς χάριτος τοῦ Θεοῦ). Though he does not use λόγος, this is another way of referring to the λόγος concept.

<sup>40</sup> Marguerat, *Historian*, 38.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Jesus' explanation of the parable, Lk 8.11-15. Jesus explicitly identifies the seed as 'the word of God' (ὁ λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ, 8.11), and emphasizes hearing (ἀκούω) and believing (πιστεύω) the word 4 times (8.12-15).

### ***4.3 Conclusion – The Unstoppable Force***

These three conceptual understandings of *λόγος* elucidate its nature and meaning in Acts.

The *λόγος* is essentially the gospel message, the good news of the ongoing missional activity of Christ, through his people, the church. It merges together Jesus, the church, and the message which they proclaim. For Luke, these three concepts are inseparable, and shed insight on his understanding of the early Christian movement and its mission. With a significant theological foundation in the Isaianic new exodus of Isa 40-55, Luke presents the Word as an unstoppable personal force, extremely active, constantly expanding everywhere, and leading the mission and expansion of the church forward. The divine *λόγος*, representing Christ, his church, and their collective gospel message, is the driving force, the primary catalyst, and the most potent stimulus for early Christian mission in Acts.

The Word's power and inevitable triumph must have been a source of strength and encouragement to its messengers, even when they suffered on its behalf. Luke's implications are clear: what was true 2-3 generations before is still true in his present day situation. The Word is unchanging, as immutable as God himself. Therefore, the Word is still advancing with power in Luke's day. The explicitly missional nature of the *λόγος* is significant for mission in Acts. Luke's presentation of the Word in Acts challenges and inspires his readers to become caught up in the triumphant expansion of the Christological Word, embodied in the growth of the church, and carried out by the missional proclamation of the gospel message, just as the first Christians were.

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<sup>42</sup> 'The mission itself can be described as the Word of God expanding and growing (Acts 6.7; 8.14; 10.36; 11.1; 12.24; 19.20)', L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1991): 23.



## CHAPTER 5 – THE POWER OF THE ΠΝΕΥΜΑ

If the divine λόγος is the primary theme of Acts, the power and activity of the Spirit is a potent secondary theme, and more precisely the means by which the Word advances with such authority. Luke has given the Spirit such central importance, that L. T. Johnson claims, ‘Acts can appropriately be called the “Book of the Holy Spirit.”’<sup>1</sup>

### 5.1 Varying Pneumatologies

It is important to understand Luke’s conception of the πνεῦμα in the context of other NT pneumatologies.<sup>2</sup> In Pauline theology the Spirit is the source of personal faith (1 Cor 12.3,9), and ‘life in the Spirit’ is normative Christian experience (Rom 8; Gal 5.16-25). The Johannine Spirit has a primary teaching function,<sup>3</sup> in which he reminds the disciples of Jesus’ teaching (Jn 14.25-26), testifies about who Jesus is (15.26-27), leads people into truth (16.13), and glorifies Jesus by revealing him to people (16.14-15). The Lukan pneumatology is somewhat different than these, for in Acts the Spirit never incites faith, or glorifies the Son.<sup>4</sup> Instead, Luke’s πνεῦμα is constantly provoking action, forbidding sin, taking hold of communities, and engaging in other active behaviors.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 14. Many others have made similar claims, but as we shall see in what follows, this is only partially true. See, also, J. L. González, *Acts: The Gospel of the Spirit* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2001), an Acts commentary written to Spanish speakers throughout Latin America and the US, addressing many of the unique social/economic struggles that group faces, as they are mirrored in Acts (urbanization, *latifundia*, landholder concerns, etc.). González emphasizes that Acts is really not about the acts of the apostles, but the acts of the Spirit. For a thorough bibliography and review of many of the key monographs and articles on Luke’s pneumatology, see Bovon, *Luke*, 225-272, 536-540.

<sup>2</sup> J. B. Shelton, *Mighty in Word and Deed: The Role of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), contains a summary and comparison of the Markan pneumatology, 6-7; the Matthean pneumatology, 7-9; and the role and activity of the Holy Spirit in Luke, 9-10, and in Acts, 10-13.

<sup>3</sup> John develops his pneumatology of the Paraclete in the context of the farewell speeches of chs. 14-16.

<sup>4</sup> Luke’s pneumatology is not contradictory but complementary to that of these other authors. The most common ground is with Paul’s concept of ‘life in the Spirit’, for Luke encourages believers to live in and by the Spirit, who is intimately involved in their lives. ‘Luke has grasped the Pauline principle that the Spirit’s essential work is not extrinsic but intrinsic, the transformation of human identity’, Johnson, *Acts*, 14.

<sup>5</sup> Marguerat, *Historian*, 109; this chapter largely follows Marguerat’s insightful narrative analysis of the Spirit in Acts, 109-28.. For more on Luke’s pneumatology, see J. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London: SCM, 1970), and *Jesus and the Spirit* (London: SCM, 1975); R. P. Menzies, *The Development of Early Christian Pneumatology with Special Reference to Luke-Acts*, JSNT.SS 54 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), and *Empowered for Witness: The Spirit in Luke-Acts*, rev. ed., *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* SS 6 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994); J. Hull, *The Holy Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles* (London: Lutterworth, 1967) – an important earlier foundational work, though somewhat less critical; J. Hur, *A Dynamic Reading of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts*

Luke never explains the Spirit, but shows him in action. He never discusses the Spirit, or presents any systematic theological conception of the Spirit, but instead portrays the πνεῦμα as a personal and prominent character in his narrative, who intervenes in the lives and affairs of Acts' other characters.<sup>6</sup> For Luke, as for all good story tellers, showing is better than telling.<sup>7</sup> Marguerat explains the implications of such a decision:

Luke presents less a concept than a *pragmatic of the Holy Spirit*. There is no question here: this operation is not theologically innocent. To draw the Spirit into the scene of the narrative is to enroll in the programme a God who intervenes in human affairs. The pragmatic of the Spirit translates and inspires an experience of the Spirit. In his own way, Luke rejoins the situation of the first Christians, practical theologians, indwelt by the Spirit, living by him, committed to proclaiming the kerygma rather than to advancing a teaching about the Spirit.<sup>8</sup>

## 5.2 The Distribution of the Πνεῦμα in Acts

The apparently all-pervasive presence of the Spirit is striking in Acts. Πνεῦμα occurs 70 times in 68 verses,<sup>9</sup> which represents about 18 per cent of the 379 occurrences in the NT.<sup>10</sup>

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(Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001); J. M. Penney, *The Missionary Emphasis of Lukan Pneumatology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997); W. H. Shepherd, *The Narrative Function of the Holy Spirit as a Character in Luke-Acts*, SBL.DS 147 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1994); E. Schweizer, 'πνεῦμα', *TDNT* 6 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968): 404-415; Shelton, *Mighty in Word and Deed*; M. B. Turner, 'Jesus and the Spirit in Lucan Perspective', *TynB* 32 (1981): 3-42, and *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> See Shepherd, *Narrative Function*, esp. 90-98, where he presents his justification for treating the Spirit as a character in the Acts narrative. This work is an example of applying narrative criticism, and esp. characterization (see 43-90 for Shepherd's methodological foundations), to the text of Acts, and particularly to the character of the Holy Spirit. He concludes that Luke's inclusion of the Spirit as a character and virtual substitute for God in his narrative led directly to the development of Trinitarian theology and the divine nature of the Spirit in the early church, 254-257. For a similar methodological approach that comes to different conclusions, see Hur, *Dynamic Reading*, 115-180. Hur is also an example of a final form reading of Luke-Acts, as opposed to Shepherd, 31-36, 279. This is what is meant by 'a dynamic reading', combining narrative analysis with a final form holistic reading which takes into account the (implied) reader's response, 34.

<sup>7</sup> Shepherd, *Narrative Function*, 249: 'Indirect presentation of character is the preferred method for every characterization. To let a character be presented by speech and action is a favorite authorial device.'

<sup>8</sup> Marguerat, *Historian*, 110. This 'pragmatic' approach has led some scholars to conclude that Luke does not possess a very refined pneumatology, for he never clearly articulates it. While this is possible, it is not a necessary conclusion. Luke is writing narrative theology, and chooses to be more descriptive than prescriptive about the activity and nature of the Spirit.

<sup>9</sup> Of the 70 total occurrences of πνεῦμα in Acts, eight refer to evil/unclean spirits: 5.16; 8.7; 16.16,18; 19.12,13,15,16; five refer to a human/natural spirit: 7.59; 17.16; 18.25; 23.8,9 – these are somewhat ambiguous; and the remaining 57 refer to the Holy Spirit: 1.2,5,8,16; 2.4 [twice],17,18,33,38; 4.8,25,31; 5.3,9,32; 6.3,5,10; 7.51,55; 8.15,17,18,19,29,39; 9:17,31; 10.19,38,44,45,47; 11.12,15,16,24,28; 13.2,4,9,52; 15.8,28; 16.6,7; 19.2 [twice],6,21; 20.22,23,28; 21.4,11; 28.25. The Western textual variants in 15.29 and 19.1 are not considered. E. Richards, 'Pentecost as a Recurrent Theme in Luke-Acts', *New Views on Luke-Acts* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1990): 133-49, claims that 58 of the total 70 references refer to the Holy Spirit, by adding 18.25 to the list.

<sup>10</sup> Mark has 23 occurrences of πνεῦμα, Matthew 19, John 24, the Pauline Corpus 146, and Luke's Gospel 36.

### Table 5.1 Relevant Πνεῦμα Occurrences and Concentrations in Acts

1. The Jerusalem Community (1-7)	253 verses/21 occurrences	<u>12.04</u> verses per reference	7.5% (2 <sup>nd</sup> )
2. The Peter Cycle (8-12)	186 verses/18 occurrences	<u>10.33</u> verses per reference	9.1% (1 <sup>st</sup> )
3. The Pauline Mission (13-20)	302 verses/15 occurrences	<u>20.13</u> verses per reference	5.0% (3 <sup>rd</sup> )
4. The Imprisonment of Paul (21-28)	266 verses/3 occurrences	<u>88.67</u> verses per reference	1.1% (4 <sup>th</sup> )

Some scholars have posited that there is a steady decline in total references to the Spirit from the beginning of Acts to the end.<sup>11</sup> But in actuality, the greatest concentration per verse is in the Peter Cycle, and the Pauline Mission is not far behind. The last section of Acts has much less reference to the Spirit's activity, but there are apparent narrative explanations for this.<sup>12</sup>

#### *5.3 The Activity of the Πνεῦμα in Acts*

There is a shift in the type of πνεῦμα activity over the course of Acts.<sup>13</sup> The initial activity of the Spirit is dominated by corporate, ecstatic interventions.<sup>14</sup> There are 18 such interventions in the Jerusalem community, 11 in the Peter cycle, four in the Pauline mission, and none in the imprisonment of Paul. The Spirit moves towards personal interventions, mostly on behalf of those who serve the Word.<sup>15</sup> 'Luke's narration begins at Pentecost, in fire and loud noise; it ends with the figure of the prisoner Paul preaching in Rome. The author unfolds his story of the Church between fire and the Word...The Church is always led by the Spirit, but the breath of God does not act in identical ways from one end to the other in Acts.'<sup>16</sup>

The activity of the Spirit is diverse throughout Acts, and he works in differing ways.

Any attempt to formulaically systematize the Spirit's activity is ineffectual, and this is one of

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<sup>11</sup> E.g. Marguerat, *Historian*, 111-13. His mathematical approach does not take into account the number of verses or varying length of these sections.

<sup>12</sup> Chs. 21-28 are not stories of Christian community and conversion, but of trial narratives, in front of the people of Jerusalem (21-22), the Sanhedrin (23), Felix (24), Festus (25), Agrippa (26), a dramatic (but not supernatural) storm and shipwreck (27), and Paul's arrival and life in Rome (28). The last eight chapters also cover a time period of only 3-5 years (57-62 at the most). Luke is recounting a specific episode in the life of the church, but we should not conclude that the activity of the Spirit in the wider church had necessarily subsided. See ch. 15 for more on this final section of Acts.

<sup>13</sup> Marguerat, *Historian*, 112. Shepherd, *Narrative Function*, 219-220, 250-253, also raises this point, though with a less systematic methodology.

<sup>14</sup> E.g., Pentecost (ch. 2), the prayer meeting when the room is shaken (4.31), the Cornelius episode (ch. 10).

<sup>15</sup> E.g., the Spirit forbidding Paul from speaking the Word in Asia, or entering Bithynia (16.6,7). This can be explained by Luke's narrowing of focus, as he moves from broad community narratives to individualized stories. It may also give us glimpses of the normative experiences of the church with the Spirit in Luke's day.

<sup>16</sup> Marguerat, *Historian*, 113.

Luke's main points – the Spirit is free to act in any way or time that he chooses. However, certain themes and patterns emerge in the Acts narrative.

### 5.3.1 The Spirit's 'Limitations' – Miracles and Non-Believers

Throughout Acts, Luke avoids explicitly attributing miracles to the Spirit, but instead attributes them to 'power' (*δύναμις*).<sup>17</sup> This should not lead to the conclusion that in Acts the Spirit's work is confined to prophetic preaching, with no relationship whatsoever to miracles.<sup>18</sup> For Luke *δύναμις* and *πνεῦμα* are closely linked, if not interchangeable.<sup>19</sup> There are multiple instances in Luke-Acts where 'power' is used to designate the Spirit.<sup>20</sup> If this is the case, any thorough study of the activity of the Holy Spirit must also take into account references to 'power' in Acts.<sup>21</sup>

There is another limitation to the Spirit's activity in Acts: the Spirit only reaches believers, not non-believers. 'Whether groups or individuals, in Acts it is only the followers of Jesus or the holy men of Israel who are touched [by the Spirit].'<sup>22</sup> This exclusive activity amongst believers is a trademark of Lukan pneumatology, and highlights what is central for

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<sup>17</sup> The miracles of Jesus (2.22), Peter (4.7), Stephen (6.8), Philip (8.10) and Paul (19.11) are all credited to 'power'. Marguerat, *Historian*, 120. Cf. Lk 11.20 ('if I drive out demons by *the finger of God*'), with its parallel passage, Mt 12.28 ('if I drive out demons by *the Spirit of God*, then the kingdom of God has come among you'). Luke is intentional to not attribute the origin of miracles to the activity of the Spirit. This is another difference with Pauline thought, which attributes miracles to the Spirit's work (1 Cor 12.7-11).

<sup>18</sup> This is the view of Schweizer, '*πνεῦμα*', 407. For arguments against this position, see Bovon, *Luke*, 242-43; and Turner, 'Jesus and the Spirit', 14-22. For a helpful summary, cf. also Marguerat, *Historian*, 119-121. It is clear that early Christianity was united in the conviction that miracles come from the power of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>19</sup> In Peter's speech at Cornelius' house the two concepts are linked together: 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the *Holy Spirit* (*πνεῦμα*) and with *power* (*δύναμις*); how he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil' (10.38). Cf. Lk 1.17: 'He will go on before the Lord in the *Spirit* (*πνεῦμα*) and *power* (*δύναμις*) of Elijah'; Lk 4.14: 'Jesus returned to Galilee in the *power* (*δύναμις*) of the *Spirit* (*πνεῦμα*).'

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Lk 1.35: 'The *Holy Spirit* will come upon you and the *power* of the Most High will overshadow you'; Lk 24.49: 'I am going to send you what My Father has promised (a reference to the *Holy Spirit*); but stay in the city until you have been clothed with *power* from on high'; Acts 1.8: 'You will receive *power* when the *Holy Spirit* comes upon you'. Another example is Paul's encounter with Elymas Bar-Jesus (Acts 13.9-11). Paul is 'filled with the Spirit' (v. 9), and punishes Elymas with blindness, which is a 'miracle' of sorts. The proximity of language in these examples implies a direct link between the Spirit and miracles.

<sup>21</sup> There are at least nine: Acts 1.8; 2.22; 3.12; 4.7,33; 6.8; 8.13; 10.38; 19.11. Notice the juxtaposition in 4.6-8 – 'they began to inquire, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?" Then Peter, filled with the *Holy Spirit*, said...' There are many other miracle stories, and references to 'signs and wonders' in Acts.

<sup>22</sup> Marguerat, *Historian*, 112, who points out that the *πνεῦμα* does not stop Saul on the Damascus road (Acts 9), or lead Julius the centurion to protect Paul (Acts 27).

Luke: the Holy Spirit builds (and builds up) the church. The Spirit inspires and empowers the believer for mission, but is not responsible for the conversion of an individual.<sup>23</sup>

Luke imposes these apparent restrictions on the Spirit to attach them exclusively to Christ's power and activity. Miracles in Acts are a sign of the Risen One's work; it is 'the name of the Lord (Jesus)' that heals (3.6,16; 4.10,30; 16.8; 19.13). Similarly, it is the name of the Lord that saves (2.21; 4.12; 10.43; 22.16), and new believers are always baptized in the name of the Lord (2.38; 8.16; 10.48; 19.5).<sup>24</sup> These restrictions also highlight the Spirit's primary roles for Luke, which surround advancing the mission and building up the church.

Luke consistently reserves the privileged place of miracles and personal faith for the Christological Word: 'Luke, with Paul, refuses to place the Spirit in the forefront. It is the Word, stimulated and accompanied by the Spirit, which is the most important.'<sup>25</sup> The Spirit is a powerful vehicle in Acts; but what it transports is the Word, and this is Luke's primary theological focus. Acts' first theme and focus is not the Spirit, but the Word.

### 5.3.2 *The Turning Point – Resurrection & Pentecost*

A fundamental pneumatological shift happens after the resurrection of Jesus. Before this, Jesus is the sole bearer of the Spirit.<sup>26</sup> Luke stresses the exclusive bond between Jesus and the Spirit before Easter in multiple ways,<sup>27</sup> and is clear that Jesus alone comes from the Spirit and is continually inhabited by the Spirit.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> In Acts 5.29-32 the preaching of repentance, the witness of believers, and the witness of the Spirit are all mentioned in close proximity. Passages like this highlight Luke's ambiguity on this point. All that can be said with certainty is that the role of the Holy Spirit in conversion is not among Luke's main interests.

<sup>24</sup> Marguerat, *Historian*, 121.

<sup>25</sup> Bovon, *Luke*, 238.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. the early declaration of John the Baptist: 'I baptize you with water...He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire' (Lk 3.16; Mk 1.8; Mt 3.11). Only Luke picks this up as a promise fulfilled through Pentecost (Acts. 1.5), though cf. Jn 20.22. Marguerat, *Historian*, 114.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. the virgin birth (Lk 1.35), Jesus' declaration, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me' (Lk 4.18), and the fact that Jesus rarely talks about the Spirit and does not give him to his disciples before Easter (in Luke's Gospel).

<sup>28</sup> Schweizer, 'πνεῦμα', 404-405, stresses Jesus' mastery over the Spirit, yet a more balanced view is that the Lukan Christ is both a product of the Spirit and a master of the Spirit, in a mutual and not one-sided relationship. See Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, and Turner, 'Jesus and the Spirit'.

The transition point is the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. Now Jesus is absent (Acts 1.11), and the Spirit comes upon believers (Acts 2; Jn 16.7). Luke wants every reader to understand that the church is not born of human effort or activity, but from God: 'Being *exalted* (ὕψωθεις) at the right hand of God, and *having received* (λαβών) from the Father the *promise of the Holy Spirit*, he [Jesus] has *poured out* (ἐξέχεεν) this that you both see and hear' (2.33).<sup>29</sup> This verse is a hermeneutical key to Luke's pneumatology, and conveys the resurrection of Jesus, the promise of the Spirit, and his being poured out on believers.

### 5.3.3 *The Spirit as Witness*

This Spirit that comes at Pentecost is assigned a specific role: '*You will receive power* (δύναμις) when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and *you will be my witnesses* (μάρτυρες) in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth' (Acts 1.8). The Spirit is a source of power, which enables the disciples to be witnesses of Jesus from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. With this verse Luke locates the beginning of the Christian mission in the founding gift of the Spirit, and stresses that his power not only begins the mission, but sustains it as well. In Acts, the Spirit is actually the great witness to Jesus, who leads and empowers God's people in witnessing: 'We are *witnesses* (μάρτυρες) of these things; and *so is the Holy Spirit*, whom God has given to those who obey him' (5.32). The remainder of the Acts narrative develops this primary objective of the Spirit: to witness about Jesus.<sup>30</sup>

#### 5.3.3.1 *The Spirit's Verbal Witness – Proclamation and Prophecy*

Acts 4 sheds light on how the Spirit expresses its witness. After imprisoning Peter and John (4.3), the Jerusalem authorities release them, threatening dire consequences if they continue to teach in the name of Jesus (4.18,21,29). When they are released, they focus on the continuation of the mission: 'Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that your servants may

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<sup>29</sup> Luke merges two Jewish traditions: endowing the Messiah with the Spirit (Isa 11.2; 42.1; 61.1), and sharing the Spirit with God's people (Num 11.29; Ezek 39.29; Joel 3.1). Marguerat, *Historian*, 115.

<sup>30</sup> Marguerat, *Historian*, 115.

*speaking your word with all boldness* (μετὰ παρρησίας πάσης λαλεῖν τὸν λόγον σου),<sup>31</sup> while you extend your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of your holy servant Jesus' (4.29-30). There is a dramatic response to this prayer: 'the place where they had gathered together was shaken,<sup>32</sup> and they were all *filled with the Holy Spirit* (ἐπλήσθησαν ἅπαντες Πνεύματος Ἁγίου) and began to speak the word of God *with boldness*' (μετὰ παρρησίας, 4.31). God's response concerns the witness, but not healings: the request to speak the word with *παρρησία* is granted, and linked to the filling of the Spirit.<sup>33</sup> In Acts, there is a strong connection between the Spirit and bold proclamation of the Word.<sup>34</sup>

This theme of proclamation is underlined by Peter's message at Pentecost: 'In the last days, *I will pour out My Spirit* (ἐκχεῶ ἀπὸ τοῦ πνεύματός μου) on all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall *prophecy* (προφητεύσουσιν)...in those days *I will pour out My Spirit*', and Luke adds for emphasis, 'and they will prophecy' (προφητεύσουσιν, 2.17-18).<sup>35</sup> This underscores Luke's point: the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of prophecy, who enables the communication of a prophetic message, with authority.<sup>36</sup> The instances of *glossolalia* (γλῶσσα) also reinforce this theme of Spirit inspired communication and proclamation;

<sup>31</sup> As seen in ch. 3, *παρρησία* connotes courage, confidence, boldness and freedom of speech.

<sup>32</sup> The earthquake is a sign of Divine assent and fulfillment, see 16.6. Cf. P. W. Van der Horst, 'Hellenistic Parallels to Acts (Chapters 3 and 4)', *JSNT* 35 (1989): 37-46, 'That the earth or a building is shaken as a sign of the deity's assent or advent is a frequently occurring motif in ancient, both Jewish and pagan, literature', 44-45. He then goes on to list many examples, including Ps 17.7-8; 4 Ezra 6.14ff.; Josephus, *Ant.*, 7.76-77; Plut., *Vita Publica*, 9.6: 'The following signs are said to have been given before the war. Pisaurum... was swallowed by chasms in the earth'; Lucian, *Menip.*, 9-10: 'Meanwhile the Mage...shouted at the top of his voice an invocation to all spirits...As he ended, there was a great commotion, earth was burst open by the incantation...Quaked in his dark abyss the King of Shades'; Homer, *Iliad*, 1.528-530: 'The son of Cronos spoke, and bowed his dark brow in assent, and the ambrosial locks waved from the king's immortal head; and he made great Olympus quake'; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1.179-180; 9.782-784.

<sup>33</sup> This follows Jesus' earlier promise to give them the Spirit's assistance in case of persecution (Lk 12.11-12).

<sup>34</sup> It is 'filled with the Spirit' that Peter speaks to the people of Jerusalem (4.8). Wisdom and the Spirit give Stephen's word its force (6.10); it is the same for Barnabas in Antioch (11.24). Schweizer, 'πνεῦμα', 406-413.

<sup>35</sup> Quoting Joel 2.28-32; Num 11.29. Note the double repetition: God pours out his Spirit, leading to prophecy.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. M. B. Turner, 'The Spirit of Prophecy and the Power of Authoritative Preaching in Luke-Acts: A Question of Origins', *NTS* 38 (1992): 66-88, esp. 68-72 for a list of the different ways the charismata of the 'Spirit of prophecy' empower the preaching and witness in Luke-Acts.

prophecy and tongues are linked together in Acts.<sup>37</sup> Luke likely derives this idea that the Holy Spirit is a spirit of prophecy from the OT.<sup>38</sup> The parallel between the OT *ruach* (רוּחַ), which inspired ministry and revelation, and the NT πνεῦμα προφητικόν, is evident.<sup>39</sup>

In Luke-Acts the Spirit's work is nearly always a missional and verbal witness of the Word, a work of bold prophetic proclamation.<sup>40</sup> Shelton concludes, 'The role that seizes Luke's attention the most...is that of Spirit-inspired witness...Spirit-inspired witness dominates the one quarter of the NT that we call Luke-Acts.'<sup>41</sup>

### 5.3.3.2 *The Spirit as the Director of the Mission*

In Acts, the Holy Spirit is also strategist and tactical director of the broader mission of the church (1.8; 4.29-31): 'Luke hardly held that the apostles, or even the Church, were custodians of the Spirit, that He was theirs to impart. The Church did not control the Spirit; the Spirit controlled the Church. Where He led, the Church must follow.'<sup>42</sup> This is seen in the way the Spirit guides and oversees Philip's ministry in Samaria (8.26,29, 'the Spirit said to Philip', 39, 'the Spirit of the Lord caught up Philip', 40). In the Cornelius episode, Cornelius (10.3-6) and Peter (10.10-15) receive a supernatural visitation, and then the Spirit instructs Peter to go to Cornelius' household (10.19-20; 11.12). As Peter is preaching, the Spirit falls on Cornelius' household in a way which mirrors Pentecost (10.47; 11.15).<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> 10.45-46: 'the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also, for they heard them *speaking in tongues and extolling God*'; 19.6: 'The Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied'.

<sup>38</sup> 'Although the activity of the divine Spirit is the essential theme of his writings, St. Luke has little to say concerning the nature of that Spirit (apart from its vitally important relationship to the person and work of Jesus) that is not already found in the OT', G. W. H. Lampe, 'The Holy Spirit in the Writings of Luke', *Studies in the Gospels: Essays in Memory of R. H. Lightfoot*, D. E. Nineham, ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1955): 160.

<sup>39</sup> Luke stresses the prophetic dimension of the OT (e.g., in the infancy narratives, Lk 1.46,67; 2.25-27), and of John the Baptist in his Gospel (Lk 1.15,17).

<sup>40</sup> 13.52: 'the disciples were continually filled with joy (χαρά) and with the Holy Spirit' (cf. 11.23,24; 13.52; Lk 10.21). For other instances of χαρά see 8.8; 12.14; 15.3. Joy is another manifestation of the Spirit in Luke-Acts.

<sup>41</sup> Shelton, *Mighty in Word and Deed*, 13. He identifies what is uniquely Lukan material in the gospels ('L material'), and demonstrates the dominance of Spirit-inspired witness throughout Luke-Acts. His ultimate goal is clear: 'I hope that through this study the church will more clearly hear the message that Luke proclaimed nearly 2000 years ago: "Filled with the Holy Spirit...speak the word of God with boldness"', 13. Cf. his chapter about the Spirit in Acts, and 'the Holy Spirit as Director of Missions', 125-156.

<sup>42</sup> Hull, *Holy Spirit in Acts*, 178.

<sup>43</sup> This episode shows the Spirit firmly guiding the mission, determined to open it to Gentiles.



The Spirit also guides and directs Paul's mission and ministry. The Spirit initiates Paul and Barnabas being sent out at Antioch (13.2,4), forbids Paul from speaking the word in Asia on his second missionary journey (16.6), restricts the evangelization of Bithynia (16.7), and re-directs him towards a western Aegean mission (16.8-10). Paul's journey to and arrest in Jerusalem are explicitly directed by the Spirit (20.22; 19.21), and are confirmed by the Spirit-inspired prophetic activity of other Christians (20.23; 21.4,11). Luke insists that the church's missional activity is to always be fully directed by the Holy Spirit.<sup>44</sup>

#### 5.3.4 *The Spirit Builds the Church*

Pentecost establishes the early church as a missionary community, in which everyone is involved in the mission by receiving the Spirit in order to witness to the risen Christ. The first seven chapters of Acts are marked by the expansion of the Christian community.<sup>45</sup>

Luke's dramatic vocabulary in the early chapters also points towards this miraculous growth,<sup>46</sup> which is undeniably the work of the Spirit. From that starting point, the Spirit expands the church, continually prodding the believers beyond their natural boundaries.<sup>47</sup>

##### 5.3.4.1 *The Spirit Founds the Church – Echoes of Pentecost*

Pentecost is the church's founding event, and at each subsequent stage in its progression of growth, some echo of the first Pentecost is seen.<sup>48</sup> First, Samaria is evangelized by Philip (ch. 8), and the Samaritans 'receive the Holy Spirit' (ἐλάμβανον Πνεῦμα Ἅγιον, 8.17) at the

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<sup>44</sup> This follows the pattern in Jesus' ministry – Jesus' entire mission is directed by the Spirit, as Luke makes clear in Acts 1.2; 10.38. Shelton, *Mighty in Word and Deed*, 125.

<sup>45</sup> Around the Twelve, there are 120 believers (1.15), then 3,000 at Pentecost (2.41), then 5,000 at Peter and John's arrest (4.4). Whether these figures imply men (ἄνθρωπος, 4.4) only or not, Luke is systematic in presenting the dramatic growth of the community in Christianity's golden age; there is no exception.

<sup>46</sup> In Acts 1-7 – 'the multitude' (πλῆθος), 6 occurrences: 2.6; 4.32; 5.14,16; 6.2,5; 'many' (πολύς), eight occurrences: 1.3; 2.40,43; 4.4,17,22; 5.12; 6.7; 'to increase' (πληθύνω), three times: 6.1,7; 7.17; 'to add' (προστίθῃμι), three times: 2.41,47; 5.14; 'big' (μέγας), nine times: 2.20; 4.33a,33b; 5.5,11; 6.8; 7.11,57,60. There are also 32 occurrences of πᾶς and five of ἅπας to express totality.

<sup>47</sup> The cultural boundary of Israel (Acts 8-11), the religious boundary of the Law (10.10-16), and the geographical boundary of Asia (16.6-10). Marguerat, *Historian*, 116.

<sup>48</sup> See Richards, 'Pentecost', 133-149. In addition to the following 'echoes' of Pentecost, Richards includes 4.31 (the community at prayer), 135, and adds that the primary 'Pentecosts' all happen at the beginning of a new mission field: to the Jews (2.1ff.), to the Samaritans (8.14-17), and to the Gentiles (10-11), and that Peter and the twelve are always involved in the opening of these new mission areas, 143-144. 'The Spirit and the Pentecost theme provide the link between the Christian mission and the divine plan', 145.

hands of Peter and John.<sup>49</sup> Then the opening of the gospel to the Gentiles comes, with the encounter of Peter and Cornelius (chs. 10-11).<sup>50</sup> After this, the Spirit selects Barnabas and Paul for the first intentional Gentile missionary activity (13.2,4).<sup>51</sup> Then the Spirit forces Paul and Silas to leave Asia and go towards Europe (16.6-10).<sup>52</sup> Another ‘mini-Pentecost’ takes place in Ephesus around Paul, with the outpouring of glossolalia (γλώσσαις, 19.6).<sup>53</sup> Finally, Paul, ‘compelled/bound by the Spirit’ (δεδεμένος τῷ πνεύματι, 20.22), departs for Jerusalem, starting a series of events that culminate in Paul reaching Rome, and martyrdom.<sup>54</sup>

Luke seems to understand each of these episodes as a new level or phase of the Christian mission, and in each of them, it is the Spirit that draws the believers towards God’s ultimate plan for them. Luke is showing that the Spirit births the church, and then builds it piece by piece, stage by stage. As Richards explains:

Luke uses the Pentecost theme to...present the unfolding of the divine plan, and to trace the missionary activity of the ‘absent’ Lord and his witnesses...The Spirit for Luke is a pervading reality throughout this divine schema, whose presence accounts for the origin, life, and mission of the community, and which grants the believer boldness, comfort, and peace...Thus, Pentecost for Luke, is a paradigmatic episode that, in parallel with Jesus’ reception of the Spirit, signals conferral of power for and the beginning of the mission and witness to the ends of the earth.<sup>55</sup>

Acts 9.31 attributes the growth and building up of the church to the work of the Holy Spirit: ‘So the church (ἐκκλησία) throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace (εἰρήνην), *being built up* (οἰκοδομουμένη) and moving forward in the fear of the Lord and in the encouragement (παρακλήσει) of the Holy Spirit (ἁγίου πνεύματος), *it continued to increase* (ἐπληθύνετο).’ The Spirit is not the origin of faith, but the Spirit initiates testimony,

<sup>49</sup> This marks the beginning of the Samaritan mission.

<sup>50</sup> This should be regarded as the conversion of Peter rather than Cornelius, for there is nothing that indicates a change on Cornelius’ part (though we can assume some change did happen), but there is much that changes about Peter, as God leads him to abandon the Torah and its purity rules (10.9-33,44-48). Some have called this the ‘second Pentecost’, because the Spirit’s manifestations mirror the first Pentecost, 11.15-17: ‘*The Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning...God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us.*’

<sup>51</sup> This marks the first intentionally organized extra-local missional activity.

<sup>52</sup> The crossing from Asia to Europe is a geographical transition point, which may have been important to Luke.

<sup>53</sup> This is the beginning of the Pauline urban mission in Asia.

<sup>54</sup> Paul did not go to Jerusalem against the Spirit’s guidance, but because of it. People pleaded with him not to go (21.4,12), because the Spirit revealed what awaited him there, not because the Spirit prohibited it (21.11-12).

<sup>55</sup> Richards, ‘Pentecost’, 148. Witherington, *Acts*, 134-135 stresses the difference between the original Pentecost and all subsequent activity of the Spirit in Acts; though there are similarities, the Pentecost story of Acts 2 is unique, as the inception of the mission.

once a person has responded to the Word in faith, which causes the continued missional growth of the church. This pattern of Christological faith preceding the receiving of the Spirit and the call to be a witness is repeated throughout the Acts narrative.<sup>56</sup> Luke 'situates faith exclusively in relation to Christ, while missionary activity is the Spirit's realm.'<sup>57</sup>

#### 5.3.4.2 *The Spirit Guards the Church*

The Spirit also builds up the church in Acts by establishing and protecting its unity. Luke emphasizes that the original community of the Twelve was one (1.12; 2.1.), and the three early summary passages accentuate the unity of the church.<sup>58</sup> These summaries contain multiple unity phrases, such as 'together',<sup>59</sup> 'of one heart and soul',<sup>60</sup> they shared according to everyone's needs,<sup>61</sup> to the point where no one was needy among them.<sup>62</sup>

Marguerat shows that there is a connection with the Spirit in each of these passages.<sup>63</sup> The first summary (2.42-47) is the conclusion of the long Pentecost narrative sequence,<sup>64</sup> which is all about the activity of the Spirit, and culminates with this summary, focusing on the formation and unification of the believing community. The implication is that the intervention of the Spirit leads to a loving and unified community, the church.<sup>65</sup>

The second summary explains the sharing of possessions, illustrated by the positive example of Barnabas (4.32-37). The story of Ananias and Sapphira follows, whose death

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<sup>56</sup> The Samaritans believe Philip's teaching (8.5-6), are baptized (8.12), and then receive the Spirit (8.14-17). The same progression is true of Cornelius (10.2,44) and the Ephesians (19.1-2,6).

<sup>57</sup> Marguerat, *Historian*, 118.

<sup>58</sup> 2.42-47 sets forth the theme of the fellowship (*κοινωνία*) of the believers, 4.32-35 develops the theme of the community of goods, and 5.12-16 presents healing activity. Note the multiple verbs in the imperfect, which indicates the enduring quality of the community, in all three summaries.

<sup>59</sup> 'Ὁμοθυμαδόν, 2.46; 5.12; ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ, 2.44,46 – this awkward phrase is a Septuagintalism which should probably be best translated as 'of one accord', and occurs 55 times in the LXX. This is a term used for the Qumranic community as well. See 1QS 1:1; 3:7. Barrett, *Acts*, 1.167.

<sup>60</sup> Ἦν καρδία καὶ ψυχὴ μία, 4.32.

<sup>61</sup> Διμερίζον αὐτὰ πᾶσιν καθότι ἂν τις χρεῖαν εἶχεν, 2.45.

<sup>62</sup> Οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐνδεής τις ἦν ἐν αὐτοῖς, 4.34.

<sup>63</sup> Marguerat, *Historian*, 122-123.

<sup>64</sup> Including the account of the event (2.1-13), Peter's speech (2.14-36), the people's reaction (2.37-41), and this summary statement (2.42-47). There is no transition at 2.42, whereas the location changes in 3.1, a clear break.

<sup>65</sup> 'The irruption of the breath of God creating the Church finds its ethical concretization in the unity of the believers', Marguerat, *Historian*, 123.

sentence is carefully justified: ‘Why has Satan filled your heart to *lie to the Holy Spirit*

(ψεύσασθαί σε τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον)...Why did you agreed together to *put the Spirit of the Lord*

*to the test?*’ (πειράσαι τὸ πνεῦμα κυρίου, 5.3,9).<sup>66</sup> Marguerat explains this:

The crime is not in financial withholding, but in offending against the principle of sharing everything in common (4.32). Ananias and Sapphira have not sinned against morality, but against the Spirit in his function of constructing unity...The reader learns how the Church, in its origin, was directed by the Spirit while also being exposed to Satan and how God has (terribly) protected it from the attacks of Evil.<sup>67</sup>

These summary passages reveal Luke’s conviction that the Spirit is the creator and guardian of the unified *κοινωνία* fellowship of the Christian community. For Luke, the unity of the first Christians gives concrete form to the action of the Spirit, and is one of the primary ways that he actively builds (and builds up) the church. As Polhill explains, ‘Luke depicted it as a unique period, the new people of God in Christ, filled with the Spirit, growing by leaps and bounds. There was no room for distrust, for duplicity, for any breach in fellowship. The same Spirit that gave the community its growth also maintained its purity.’<sup>68</sup>

#### 5.3.4.3 *The Spirit Builds Up the Individual Believer*

Though the transformation and growth of the individual is not Luke’s primary interest,<sup>69</sup> Acts contains hints of the Spirit moving in this way in the four ‘full of the Spirit’ statements:<sup>70</sup> the seven are ‘full of the Spirit and *wisdom*’ (σοφίας, 6.3); Stephen is ‘full of *faith* and the Holy

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<sup>66</sup> Note the emphasis on the Spirit. And it is not just ‘lying’ to the Spirit: ‘The Greek expression is even stronger than that – he “belied”, he “falsified” the Spirit. His action was in effect a denial, a falsification of the Spirit’s presence in the community’, Polhill, *Acts*, 157.

<sup>67</sup> Marguerat, *Historian*, 123. ‘Ananias and Sapphira were together in this deed (συνεφωνήθη; cf. συν in v.1), but it was the wrong sort of togetherness. It was a togetherness that violated the togetherness of the Christian community’, Witherington, *Acts*, 218. Note the irony of their ‘togetherness’.

<sup>68</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, 161. Cf. Marshall, *Acts*, 110-114.

<sup>69</sup> Some scholars argue that Luke’s emphasis on *κοινωνία* is as close as he comes to the personal sanctifying transformation and regeneration of the Spirit in the lives of believers (Pauline pneumatology), Marguerat, *Historian*, 124. Menzies is extreme in this view: ‘Luke never attributes soteriological functions to the Spirit and his narrative presupposes a pneumatology which excludes this dimension...Luke consistently portrays the Spirit as the source of prophetic inspiration, which...empowers God’s people for effective service’, *Empowered for Witness*, 44. For Menzies’ view of the four ‘full of the Spirit’ passages, see 258-259. Turner, *Power from on High*, debates him, presenting a more balanced view.

<sup>70</sup> There is some connection between the Spirit and the character attributes here, but how explicit the connection is, and whether Luke is implying causality or not, is unclear, though it does seem likely. All of these characteristics would have been familiar signs of the Spirit for Jews, and are found in the LXX.

Spirit' (πίστεως, 6.5); Barnabas is a 'good man (ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός), and full of the Spirit and faith' (πίστεως, 11.24); finally, the disciples are 'filled with joy and the Holy Spirit' (χαρᾶς, 13.52).

These references point to a sanctifying work in the personal life of the believer, parallel to Paul's 'fruit of the Spirit' (Gal 5.22-23). Turner argues that they demonstrate that the Spirit does have a personal effect on a person, not simply in a moment of empowering charisma, but also in a long-term transformation of character.<sup>71</sup> The same Spirit of prophecy which fuels and directs the mission of the church also strengthens the individual as well.<sup>72</sup> For Luke, a life endowed with the Spirit will result in increased wisdom, faith, joy, and 'goodness' of character, in addition to direct empowerment for mission.<sup>73</sup>

#### **5.4 Conclusion – Empowered by the Spirit**

Luke expresses the Spirit's role of founding, building, nurturing, and protecting the church more strongly than any other NT author. He shows the Spirit empowering believers for bold testimony about Jesus, and leading them as the chief witness to Jesus, and the 'Director of Missions'.<sup>74</sup> Luke involves the Spirit in many of the details of the early church.<sup>75</sup> The essence of the Lukan pneumatology is the missional Spirit of proclamation and prophecy.

The Spirit is a primary missional stimulus in Acts, for it is the Spirit that motivates and empowers believers to engage in evangelism, and that carries the Word forward in its unstoppable mission. He is not given to the church primarily for its own sake, or its selfish enjoyment, but for the missional blessing of others.<sup>76</sup> The Spirit is given to all believers, to

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<sup>71</sup> Turner, *Power from on High*, 408-412.

<sup>72</sup> Turner claims that we should assume this, given the Jewish and Christian presuppositions along these lines, and itemizes the strengthening of the individual as follows: 1) the revelatory gift that makes a person aware of God's presence and leading; 2) the source of spiritual wisdom which fuels personal discipleship, prayer and doxology; 3) the enabling to take part in the communal life and witness of the church, *Power from on High*, 418.

<sup>73</sup> All of these are results in and of themselves, but also are secondary impulses towards mission – a person filled with wisdom, with joy, with goodness, and with faith will surely make a more effective missionary.

<sup>74</sup> Shelton, *Mighty in Word and Deed*, 125-127.

<sup>75</sup> Even setbacks are the work of the Spirit: 8.1,4; 16.6-7; 20.22; Marguerat, *Historian*, 128.

<sup>76</sup> Hull, *Holy Spirit in Acts*, 178: 'The evangelization of the world was Luke's outstanding interest and concern. In Acts he has told how the Church was born...and how it grew from a tiny sect within Judaism into a liberated and liberating movement which began to cover the earth. By his stress on *why the Church received the Spirit, not for its selfish, secret enjoyment, but to enable it to bear witness for Christ*, Luke has told how the Church

build the church, to inspire mission, and to protect the unity of the developing κοινότητα. He also aids in the personal character transformation of individuals within that community.

Because Acts is a story, Luke never explains the work of the Spirit, but instead describes it, weaving the Spirit into the narrative in memorable and vivid fashion.<sup>77</sup> This ‘pragmatic of the Spirit’ does leave undeniable gaps, for Luke’s goal is not systematic theological instruction, but compelling narrative.<sup>78</sup> Acts directs the reader not to comprehend the Spirit, but to live from him and in him, and to join with him in his missional journey throughout human history and across the earth. Luke’s message is apparent: the Spirit of God has not changed, and he is still as available, as powerful, and as compelling in Luke’s day as he was in the earliest days of the church. Luke invites his church to receive the Spirit’s power, join in with him in his mission, and be transformed in the process. Luke presents this Spirit-empowerment in Acts as a vital stimulus to Christian mission.

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can be born again and become once more a liberated and liberating force. Perhaps his greatest theological contribution was his understanding of why the Church is here, what its purpose is and how that purpose can be achieved. The Church is here to allow Christ to continue His ministry through it. Its overriding purpose is to bear witness for Him. Whether, and how far, the Church will achieve its purpose depends on two things: its *realization of why it has received the Spirit, not for its own sake but for the sake of others*, and its willingness to entrust itself to Him.’

<sup>77</sup> ‘By establishing a narrative role for the Holy Spirit, Luke has taken a significant step towards the eventual theological recognition of the Holy Spirit as a “person”’, Johnson, *Acts*, 15.

<sup>78</sup> He never gives us any clues as to the discerning of spirits, as do Paul (1 Cor 14), and John (1 Jn 4.1-6). Nor does he answer questions such as the relationship between conversion and baptism and the coming of the Spirit on the believer. See Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 38-102, and esp. 90-102, for an attempt at deciphering Luke’s convictions on these issues.

## CHAPTER 6 – THE UNIVERSAL PRIORITY OF THE ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ

In Acts, the Word and the Spirit forge together to create a potent theological conclusion: the εὐαγγέλιον (good news = gospel message) which the early church proclaims has a universal nature and priority.<sup>1</sup> What lies behind this is Luke's conviction that, 'Jesus is the *one* Savior for *all* peoples and this is why he must be proclaimed to *all* peoples'.<sup>2</sup> Luke expresses this emphatically: 'There is salvation in no one else (οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἄλλῳ οὐδενὶ ἢ σωτηρία); for there is no other name (οὐδὲ γὰρ ὄνομά ἐστιν ἕτερον) under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved' (δεῖ σωθῆναι ἡμᾶς, Acts 4.12). This reveals Luke's universally inclusive theological worldview, and influences every other aspect of the Acts narrative.<sup>3</sup>

According to Luke, this salvation has implications for everyone, everywhere.<sup>4</sup> It is universal, in every sense of the word – geographically, ethnically, and socially – and it affects every part of a person's life.<sup>5</sup> This chapter will examine these aspects of salvation, and demonstrate the radically universalized nature and priority of the εὐαγγέλιον in Acts.

### 6.1 Geographical Universality

Luke arranges his narrative in an intentional geographical fashion.<sup>6</sup> He also employs a sort of geographical theology, in which locations and trends often contain theological significance.

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<sup>1</sup> For preaching of the εὐαγγέλιον, see 15.7; 20.4. The verbal forms are frequent in Acts: εὐαγγελίζομαι (15 occurrences), καταγγέλλω (10 occurrences). See chapter three for these and other missional words in Acts.

<sup>2</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 71.

<sup>3</sup> Ἄλλῳ and οὐδενὶ emphasize that salvation is found in 'no one else, not even one' (4.12). Barrett explains what Luke means by salvation: 'The primary meaning of salvation is detachment from the world of the unbelieving and disobedient and attachment to the true people of God of the last days, the ἐκκλησία, the community which is constituted on the one hand by its loyalty to Jesus, and on the other by his gift of the Spirit, which makes possible a new life conformed to the new loyalty', *Acts*, 1.231.

<sup>4</sup> B. S. Rosner, 'The Progress of the Word', *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, I. H. Marshall, D. Peterson, eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998): 215-233, citing 220, highlights elements of universalism in Luke: 1) prophecy of Simon quoting Isa 42.6 (2.32); 2) John's ministry to Roman soldiers (2.1; 3.1,14); 3) Jesus' reading of Isa 61 and commendation of the Gentiles (4.16-30); 4) Jesus' friendship with tax collectors and sinners (7.34), and those on the margins of Jewish society (5.27-39; 19.5-7); 5) prominence of women – Elizabeth and Mary, Mary and Martha, women witnesses of the resurrection; 6) response of Samaritans to Jesus (9.51-56; 10.25-37; 17.11-19; cf. Acts 8.4-24).

<sup>5</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 68-72 briefly lays out these various strands of universal theology in Acts.

<sup>6</sup> This was not unusual for Greek historians. Ephorus' basic principle of arrangement of material seems to be that in a given book he will deal with matters in a particular geographical or cultural region. 'Polybius and Diodorus also kept separate the histories of the various regions, although they integrated their material more

### 6.1.1 From Jerusalem to All Nations

Luke's Gospel and Acts are geographical mirror images of each other.<sup>7</sup> In the Gospel everything moves towards Jerusalem, and ultimately Jesus must go from Galilee, through Samaria, to Jerusalem. By contrast, Acts begins with the disciples waiting in Jerusalem for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which then propels them out to other locations.

The geographical orientation of Luke's Gospel can be explained by the Jewish expectations of salvation: Jesus must go up to Jerusalem, for it is the centre from which the Jews have always looked for salvation.<sup>8</sup> For Luke, the completion of Jesus' earthly work in Jerusalem is the fulfillment of many prophetic texts within the Hebrew Scriptures, which claim that salvation comes from the Jews.<sup>9</sup>

At the end of Luke's Gospel, after the resurrection, Jesus appears to the disciples, and 'opens up their minds' by saying, 'It is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead on the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in his name *to all the nations* (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη), *beginning from Jerusalem*' (Lk 24.46-47).<sup>10</sup> This saying sets the stage geographically and theologically for what is to come in Acts, with its emphasis on the universal proclamation of the gospel to all nations, while still maintaining the importance of Jerusalem as the launching point for the universal mission.

### 6.1.2 To the Ends of the Earth – A Geographical Progression

Not only is Jerusalem the place from which salvation comes, but it is also the place from which divine empowerment to preach it comes as well (Lk 24.47,53; Acts 1.4). In light of this, the disciples wait in Jerusalem for power from on high (Acts 1.4-5), and this leads to the

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closely than did Ephorus,' R. Drews, 'Ephorus and History Written *kata genos*', *American Journal of Philology* 84 (1963): 53; also, 'Ephorus' *kata genos* History Revisited', *Hermes* 104 (1976): 497-98.

<sup>7</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 69. Johnson, *Acts*, 10-11.

<sup>8</sup> Jesus makes reference to this often: Lk 9.51; 13.22,33,35; 17.11; 18.31; 19.11,28. Witherington, *Acts*, 70.

<sup>9</sup> Many of the unique episodes in Luke reinforce his conviction about the importance of Jerusalem, such as Jesus going up to the temple as a boy (Lk 2.41-52), and the prophecies of Simeon and Anna about Jesus being the world's savior, which come from the temple (Lk 2.25-38). Luke locates Jesus in the line of OT prophets (Lk 13.33), and presents Jesus' life and teaching as a fulfillment of OT prophecy (4.18-21; 16.31; 18.31; 24.27,45).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Mt 28.19: 'Go and make disciples of *all the nations*...' The geographical goal is identical, though the specific instructions vary slightly.



Pentecost narrative (Acts 2). Acts 1.8 sets a geographical framework for the Acts narrative, and functions as its basic outline:<sup>11</sup> ‘You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem [Acts 1-7], and in all Judea and Samaria [Acts 8-9], and to the ends of the earth [Acts 10-28, including Caesarea, Antioch, Asia Minor, Greece and Rome].’<sup>12</sup> Acts can be represented by a series of five overlapping circles, originating in Jerusalem, and stretching out ever further to the north and west: 1) the persecution and martyrdom of Stephen forces believers outside of Jerusalem (8.1b-4, 33 CE), into *Judea and Samaria* (Acts 8-9, by 35 CE); 2) they make their way to *Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch on the Orontes* (11.20, by 40 CE); 3) Paul’s first missionary journey takes him as far west as *Pisidian Antioch and Attalia* (13.4-14.28, by 48 CE); 4) Paul’s second and third journeys take him as far as *Thessalonica and Berea in Macedonia, and Athens and Corinth in Achaia* (15.39-21.17, by 52 CE); 5) Paul’s imprisonment carries him all the way to *Rome, the centre of the Empire* (Acts 28.16-31, by 60 CE).<sup>13</sup>

### 6.1.3 A Mandate Unfulfilled

Geographically, the Acts narrative ends like an open book, for Christ’s mandate to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth (1.8) is not yet accomplished. Rome is the centre of the Empire, and not ‘the end of the earth.’<sup>14</sup> Therefore the missional commission of Jesus stands unrealized, which implies that the geographical mandate which Christ has initiated must continue, until the εὐαγγέλιον has actually been preached to the ends of the earth.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Haenchen rightly says of Acts 1.9, ‘the whole action of Acts becomes the fulfillment of Jesus’ word, and this is much more than a mere table of contents: it is a promise!’, *Acts*, 145-46.

<sup>12</sup> Acts 1.8 has its roots in the Isaianic Servant Songs, which speak of the message of salvation going out to the earth’s limits (e.g., Isa 49.6; 62.11). Isaiah is Luke’s favorite prophetic book, and this Isaianic theme of universality is highlighted both early and often in Luke-Acts (cf. e.g., Lk 3.6, ‘all flesh shall see the salvation of God’, to Isa 52.10). Cf. T. Moore, ‘“To the End of the Earth”: The Geographical and Ethnic Universalism of Acts 1:8 in Light of Isaianic Influence on Luke’, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40 (1997): 389-399, which shows how the Isaianic background and location of 1.8 in the text signify Luke’s universalistic perspective regarding the expansion of the gospel, and how this has *both* geographic and ethnic significance.

<sup>13</sup> This is a progression: Jerusalem (30-33 CE), Judea, Samaria (33-35), Phoenicia, Cyprus, Syria (35-40), Psidia, Pamphylia (40-48), Macedonia, Achaia (48-52), Rome (52-60); Witherington, *Acts*, 77-86.

<sup>14</sup> ‘There is no evidence that any Jew, Greek, or Roman around the first century A.D. ever conceived of Rome as being at the end of the earth’, T. C. G. Thornton, ‘To the End of the Earth: Acts 1:8’, *ET* 89 (1977-78): 374-5, citing 374. The limits of the west were further on, to Spain (cf. Paul’s intent to go to Spain, Rom 15.24,28).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Mt 24.14: ‘This gospel... will be preached in the whole world... to all the nations, then the end will come.’

The Acts narrative is only the beginning of the fulfillment of Christ's commission, and any reader of Acts would have grasped the implications of this, in terms of their own responsibility to carry on the worldwide geographical mission until all nations were reached, and the ends of the earth had heard. Though Luke never explicitly states this conclusion, his intentions are obvious. This sort of reader response is one of Luke's primary objectives – he intends to draw his readers into the church's ongoing universal mission. The text compels others to go to the ends of the earth, for what has begun in Acts must be completed.<sup>16</sup>

## 6.2 Ethnic Universality

A related theme in Acts is the ethnic universality of the theology of the early church. This is announced from the beginning of Luke's Gospel, through the prophetic words of Simeon in Lk 2.30-32: 'For my eyes have seen Your *salvation* (σωτήριον), which You have prepared in the presence of *all peoples* (πάντων τῶν λαῶν), *a light of revelation to the Gentiles* (ἐθνῶν, the nations/ethnicities/peoples), *and the glory of Your people Israel* (λαοῦ σου Ἰσραήλ).' This grouping of 'all peoples' demonstrates Luke's conviction that the σωτηρία brought about by the preaching of the εὐαγγέλιον is for every ἔθνος and λαός on the face of the earth.

### 6.2.1 Pentecost and the Universal Outlook of Acts

Many different ethnicities are present in the initial outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2.21). Because it was the Festival of Pentecost,<sup>17</sup> Jerusalem was flooded with Jewish pilgrims from many different parts of the world. Acts 2.5 says, 'There were Jews dwelling in Jerusalem, devout people *from every nation under heaven* (ἀπὸ παντὸς ἔθνους τῶν ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανόν)', and then lists them: Parthians, Medes, Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia, Judea

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<sup>16</sup> This was an effective strategy – the church continued this geographical expansion in subsequent generations.

<sup>17</sup> Also called the Feast of Weeks, *Shavout* (Dt. 16.10), the Feast of Harvest (Ex 23.26), and the day of firstfruits (Nu. 28.26), the Feast of Pentecost was the 50<sup>th</sup> day after the Sabbath of Passover week (Lev 23.15-16). Scott, 'Acts 2.9-11', 103-4, proposes that Luke is influenced by the *Book of Jubilees*, which makes Pentecost the most important of the annual festivals in the Jewish liturgical calendar (Jub 22.1), and links it with the Noahic covenant, incumbent upon all humanity after the flood (Jub 6.15-19). This highlights the significance of the event – Luke may understand Pentecost to be the fulfillment of the eschatological pilgrimage of the nations to worship in Zion.

and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, visitors from Rome, Cretans and Arabs (Acts 2.9-11).<sup>18</sup>

The phrase 'every nation under heaven' has significant LXX roots.<sup>19</sup> In Luke's eschatological theology, all peoples will be reached by this missionary movement originating in Jerusalem, but all peoples will be gathered back to Jerusalem as well.<sup>20</sup> This is in direct fulfillment of Isa 49.6, which encompasses both the restoration of Israel and the mission to be a light to the nations.<sup>21</sup> It also reflects Isa 66.18-20, the most overt expression of universalism in the OT, and a central influence on Luke's universal outlook:

*I am coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they will come and see my glory...from them I will send those who have been saved to the nations...who have neither heard my name nor seen my glory. And they will declare my glory among the nations. And they will bring your brothers from all the nations as a gift to the Lord...to my holy city Jerusalem...*

This passage is about the eschatological ingathering of the nations, but also about the missional sending out of 'those who have been saved to the nations'. Some scholars consider it to be the first biblical reference to 'the sending of individuals to distant peoples in order to proclaim God's glory among them.'<sup>22</sup>

The Pentecost scene sets the missional agenda in Acts; many different ethnicities hear the good news in their own language, which implies that the message is for all tongues and peoples.<sup>23</sup> 'This Pentecost event is an anticipation of the whole mission to the nations which unfolds in the rest of the Book of Acts...the Diaspora Jews who gathered in Jerusalem

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<sup>18</sup> There are 16 distinct ethnicities in this 'table of nations'. All of these nations had known Jewish Diasporan populations, and were places to which Israel and Judah had been exiled centuries earlier. See Polhill, *Acts*, 102-104. The table of nations in 2.9-11 most likely alludes to the table of nations tradition of Gen 10 (just before the Tower of Babel), reformulated in 1 Chr 1.1-2.2. The Pentecost table of nations also reflects multiple OT passages with an eschatological outlook, e.g., Eze. 38-39 and Dan 11. For a summary of this debate on its origins and meaning, see Scott, 'Acts 2.9-11', 110-123.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Deut 2.25; 4.19; 30.4-5; Jer 38[31].8; Scott, 'Acts 2.9-11', 107-108. 'For Luke, Jerusalem was more than merely the center from which the centrifugal movement of the gospel went out to the ends of the earth; rather, Jerusalem was the center to which, in corresponding centripetal movement, the eschatological people of God must constantly return,' 108-109.

<sup>20</sup> Since the exile, Israel expected the remnant of God's people to return to Jerusalem (e.g., Mic 2.12-13; 4.6-8; Zeph 3.14-20). This ingathering sometimes took the form of a meeting in Jerusalem including the entire world, in which every nation would worship Yahweh (cf. Isa 60.1-14; Mic 4.1-5; Isa 2.1-5); Scott, 'Acts 2.9-11', 109.

<sup>21</sup> Isa 49.6: 'It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.'

<sup>22</sup> C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, D. M. G. Stalker, trans. (London: SCM, 1969): 425.

<sup>23</sup> Lk 4.18-21 has a similar function in Luke's Gospel.

represent “every nation under heaven” (Acts 2.5) and point to the universalistic thrust of the Book of Acts.<sup>24</sup> Pentecost is a hermeneutical key to Luke’s universally inclusive theology.

### 6.2.2 *The Ethiopian Eunuch*

Philip’s encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch also demonstrates Luke’s universalized ethnic convictions (Acts 8.26-40), because the eunuch could actually reach ‘the ends of the earth’ as he traveled on his way back to Ethiopia. Luke emphasizes that the two meet and separate through the intervention of the Spirit (8.26,39).<sup>25</sup> In antiquity Ethiopia is often associated with and referred to as the ends of the earth.<sup>26</sup> There had already been a lengthy interest in Ethiopia and Ethiopians by the time Luke-Acts was written.<sup>27</sup> In Luke’s day people within the Roman Empire were aware of people living at or beyond the fringes of the Roman Empire, and Greco-Romans would have seen these as living ‘at the ends of the earth’.<sup>28</sup>

The geographical location Luke refers to is the Nubian kingdom whose capital was Meroë, south of Egypt, between the fifth and sixth cataracts of the Nile.<sup>29</sup> ‘Ethiopia’ was considered the southern edge of the earth, bordering the great sea Oceanus.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, for Luke the Ethiopian eunuch is a primary example of the promise of the prophets of old being fulfilled (e.g., Isa 52.10), as different ethnic groups are being reached, and the ends of the

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<sup>24</sup> Scott, ‘Acts 2.9-11’, 122.

<sup>25</sup> This is an intentional mirroring, showing the Holy Spirit’s initiative in this encounter, Roloff, *Apostel.*, 139.

<sup>26</sup> See Herod., *Hist.*, 3.25.114: ‘he set out on his march against the Ethiopians without having...reflected that he was about to wage war in *the uttermost parts of the earth*’; Strabo, *Geog.*, 1.1.6: ‘the Ethiopians live at the ends of the earth, on the banks of Oceanus... the farthestmost of men’; Philostratus, *Life*, 6.1: ‘Ethiopia covers the western wing of the entire earth under the sun, just as India does the eastern wing; and at Meroe [the capital of Kush] it adjoins Egypt, and, after skirting a part of Libya Incognita, it ends at the sea which the poets call by the name of the Ocean, that being the name they applied to the mass of water which surrounds the earth’. As Homer originally put it, the Ethiopians are ‘at the world’s end’ (*αἰθιοπας...ἔσχατοι ἀνδρῶν*, *Odyssey*, 1.23).

<sup>27</sup> This went as far back as Herodotus, and was because of their perceived racially distinctive features. See F. M. Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970): 101-168, and, *Before Color Prejudice: The Ancient View of Blacks* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983).

<sup>28</sup> Including some of those whom the Greeks called *βάρβαροι*, meaning non-Greek people (cf. Acts 28.2). The formula in Col 3.11 shows that Paul, as well as others, were aware of people on the fringes of the Empire.

<sup>29</sup> This area is not part of modern day Ethiopia, but part of Sudan. Meroe was the capital of a world power as early as 540 BCE, and continued to at least 339 CE. Witherington, *Acts*, 295.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. C. J. Martin, ‘A Chamberlain’s Journey and the Challenge of Interpretation for Liberation’, *Semeia* 47 (1989): 105-35.

earth are hearing God's salvation.<sup>31</sup> As Witherington explains, this narrative is about 'the reaching of those from the parts of Africa that were at or beyond the borders of the Empire, those that were at the ends of the earth.'<sup>32</sup> Luke presents this episode as a foreshadowing of what is still to come: the advancement of the gospel into every ethnic region of the Roman Empire, and beyond its borders to the people groups living at the ends of the earth.

### 6.2.3 Ethnic Inclusion and the Break with Israel

There is a tension in Luke-Acts between the Jesus Movement's continuity with Israel and her scriptures in some ways,<sup>33</sup> and its discontinuity with Israel in other ways. The main factor creating the discontinuity which leads to the Christians' break with Israel is the Christian ethnic universalistic agenda.<sup>34</sup> R. Stark explains the significance of this universal emphasis:

The fact was that *religious* conversion wasn't sufficient [for Judaism]...the Jewish leadership demanded that all 'nations' become fully Jewish; there was no room for Egyptian-Jews or Roman-Jews, let alone Germanic- or British-Jews, but only for Jewish-Jews. Given the remarkable success they achieved, this ethnic barrier to conversion probably was the sole reason that the Roman Empire did not embrace the God of Abraham. It was not a mistake that Paul let Christianity repeat... What Christianity offered the world was monotheism stripped of ethnic encumbrances. People of all nations could embrace the One True God while remaining people of all nations.<sup>35</sup>

As Christianity developed, the reality that the death and resurrection of Jesus and the outpouring of the Spirit were for all peoples, Jew and Gentile alike, became more apparent.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> 'Blackness and the Ethiopian were...synonymous. The Ethiopian's blackness became proverbial.' Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity*, 5. As Snowden, Martin, and others have stressed, there is *no* evidence in antiquity of prejudice against a group of people simply because of their color or distinctive ethnic features (hair, facial features, etc.). There seems to be an appreciation and respect for black people (cf. Herod., *Hist.*, 3.114-115: 'the long-lived Ethiopians... the tallest and handsomest men in the whole world... they find out the man who is the tallest of all the citizens, and of strength equal to his height, and appoint him to rule over them... most of them lived to be a hundred and twenty years old, while some even went beyond that age... they found their flesh all glossy and sleek, as if they had bathed in oil'). For ancient art that demonstrates this see Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity*, 89, figure 64; and C. C. Vermeule, 'Greek, Etruscan, and Roman Bronzes Acquired by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston', *Classical Journal* 55 (1960): 193-204, citing 199-200, fig. 7.

<sup>32</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 293.

<sup>33</sup> Luke goes out of his way to tie early Christianity in with its Jewish roots and foundations, as has been seen.

<sup>34</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 70. Much of the theological content of Acts is the hashing out of this conviction. Cf. esp. chs. 10-12 and 15.

<sup>35</sup> Stark, *Cities of God*, 6-7. While Stark may be over-simplifying ancient Judaism, is speaking in typically controversial language, and scholars debate him on this, his point is well taken. Jews may not have even been interested in 'conquering' the Roman Empire, in the way that Christians were.

<sup>36</sup> This is emphasized by the eschatological dimension of the universal mission in the NT as well – the worldwide Gentile mission is a pre-requisite to the end, and until it is completed, the end will be delayed. 'The mission is the precondition to the end and is thus an eschatological necessity', J. M. Thompson, 'The Gentile Mission as an Eschatological Necessity', *ResQ* 14 (1971): 18-27, citing 27.

Though there were hints of this sort of thinking within the Jewish scriptures and traditions, particularly from some of the ancient prophets, most strands of first century Judaism were largely internal, ethnically narrow, and unable or unwilling to accommodate the ethnic universalism of the Jesus movement. This point of discord led directly to the divergence of Christianity and Judaism into two distinct religious systems.<sup>37</sup>

### 6.3 Social (Economic) Universality

Luke's universal theological outlook goes beyond places and ethnicities. He is eager to show the movement's *horizontal* expansion across nations, and also the gospel's *vertical* spread up and down the social spectrum of the Empire, from the least to the greatest.

#### 6.3.1 The Social Stratification of Roman Society

The ancient Roman social spectrum was characterized by a steep pyramid.<sup>38</sup> At the top were the Emperor's family, and the ruling class, made up of senators, knights, and the *patricians*.<sup>39</sup> This upper class composed about 0.5 percent (about a hundred thousand persons) of the total population (between fifty and eighty million).<sup>40</sup> Everyone else technically belonged to the 'lower class', which was broken into *plebeians*,<sup>41</sup> who were citizens, whether freemen or freedmen, and slaves. To speak of a 'middle class' in Roman society is anachronistic.<sup>42</sup> A person was either part of the aristocracy (usually by birth) or not.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> 'It is hard to doubt that what determines the discontinuity is this universalistic agenda – those facets of Judaism that make difficult or impossible the welcoming of other ethnic groups into the people of God purely on the basis of faith must either be critiqued or be seen as obsolescent [by Christians]', Witherington, *Acts*, 70.

<sup>38</sup> Gehring, *House*, 166-67 has a summary of Roman social classes. Cf. R. MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations, 50 B.C. to A.D. 284* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974); D. C. Verner, *The Household of God: The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles*, SBL.DS 71 (Chico: Scholars, 1983): 47-54; W. A. Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians* (London: SPCK, 1987): 32-39; P. F. Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987): 171-75.

<sup>39</sup> *Patricians* could trace their ancestry to the first Senate established by Romulus. The true upper classes were only accessed by birth and ancestry, and almost never by income or occupation. Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, 1.8.

<sup>40</sup> Gehring, *House*, 166. This number could have been as large as 3%, see discussion below.

<sup>41</sup> *Plebs urbana* lived in the cities, *plebs rustica* lived in the countryside. There was a lot of variation in actual wealth, power, and status among the plebs, and this is fairly ambiguous in the sources.

<sup>42</sup> The middle class is a modern social category which refers to a group's income level, grounded in Marxist analysis; B. W. Longenecker, 'Exposing the Economic Middle: A Revised Economy Scale for the Study of Early Urban Christianity', *JSNT* 31 (2009): 243-78, citing 268-69.

<sup>43</sup> 'Society resembled a mass of little pyramids of influence, each headed by a major family – or one giant pyramid headed by an autocrat – not the three-decker sandwich of upper, middle, and lower classes familiar to

### 6.3.1.1 A More Nuanced Model of Ancient Society

This is not a very useful classification for analyzing Roman society, and particularly the social composition of the church.<sup>44</sup> Meeks has observed that there is some identifiable variation amongst the plebeians.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, free farmers, tradesmen, and craftsmen with citizenship rights and property did not view themselves as members of the lower-class.<sup>46</sup> This has led to the creation of an alternative sociological model for ancient society.

**Table 6.1 A Triple Class Model of Ancient Roman Social Stratification**

Gehring <sup>47</sup>	Friesen <sup>48</sup>	Longenecker <sup>49</sup>
1) <i>Upper Class</i> Imperial leadership and upper class, knights, regional and local upper classes.	1) <i>Imperial Elites</i> – 0.04% Imperial dynasty, Roman senatorial families, a few retainers, local royalty, a few freedpersons. 2) <i>Regional or Provincial Elites</i> – 1% Equestrian families, provincial officials, some retainers, some decurial families, some freedpersons, some retired military officers. 3) <i>Municipal Elites</i> – 1.76% Most decurial families, wealthy men and women who do not hold office, some freedpersons, some retainers, some veterans, some merchants. <b>Total – 2.8%</b>	<b>3%</b>
2) <i>Middle Class</i> Wealthy freemen, free farmers, tradesmen, craftsmen, soldiers with property and possibly citizenship, property owners, householders, patrons, even individual slaves from the <i>familia Caesaris</i> .	4) <i>Moderate Surplus</i> – 7% Some merchants, some traders, some freedpersons, some artisans (esp. those who employ others), military veterans. 5) <i>Stable Near Subsistence Level (reasonable hope of remaining above the minimum level to sustain life)</i> – 22% Merchants & traders, regular wage earners, artisans, large shop owners, freedpersons, some farm families. <b>Total – 29%</b>	<b>42%</b> Expands moderate surplus to 17%, and stable near subsistence to 25%.
3) <i>Lower Class</i> Menial laborers, non-citizens, foreigners, chronic poor, slaves, prisoners.	6) <i>At Subsistence Level (often below level to sustain life)</i> – 40% Small farm families, laborers (skilled & unskilled), artisans (esp. employed by others), wage earners, most merchants & traders, small shop/tavern owners.	<b>55%</b>

us from industrial society...Patronage virtually precludes...the emergence of class consciousness...Even those marginal hangers-on to power attract others, more disadvantageously placed, as their clients...It is quite different from the three-layer sandwich of a class society', T. F. Carney, *The Shape of the Past: Models and Antiquity* (Lawrence: Coronado, 1975): 90,94,171.

<sup>44</sup> If 99% of people are lower class, it says nothing that the majority of churches originated in the lower classes.

<sup>45</sup> With the higher levels of plebs determined by some combination of the following factors: Roman and city citizenship, political/government offices in smaller cities, inherited wealth invested in land rather than trade, family, and origin (the older and the nearer to Rome the better, Greek upbringing was superior to 'barbarian', and military office or status as a veteran in a colony was socially positive). Meeks, *Moral World*, 34.

<sup>46</sup> B. Holmberg, *Sociology and the New Testament: An Appraisal* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990): 24.

<sup>47</sup> Gehring, *House*, 167, following K. Christ, 'Grundfragen der römischen Sozialstruktur', *Geschichte und Geschichtsschreibung der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983): 152-76, citing 174-76.

<sup>48</sup> S. Friesen, 'Poverty in Pauline Studies: Beyond the So-called New Consensus', *JSNT* 26 (2004): 323-61, and 'Injustice or God's Will: Explanations of Poverty in Proto-Christian Communities', *Christian Origins*, R. A. Horsley, ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005): 240-60.

<sup>49</sup> B. W. Longenecker's critique of Friesen's model, 'Middle', 243-78.

	7) <i>Below Subsistence Level – 28%</i> Some farm families, unattached widows, orphans, beggars, disabled, unskilled day laborers, prisoners.	
	<b>Total – 68%</b>	

While these are not technical distinctions,<sup>50</sup> each category contains significantly varying levels of wealth and social status, and they certainly blurred in actuality, this second model is more nuanced and useful for analytical purposes than the previous categorization.<sup>51</sup>

### 6.3.1.2 *The Social Composition of the Pauline Churches*

There is much debate about the social status of the early churches. The older view is that early Christianity was ‘a religion of the slaves and the oppressed, made up of poor peasants and workers.’<sup>52</sup> However, a ‘New Consensus’ has arisen,<sup>53</sup> articulated primarily by G. Theissen and W. Meeks,<sup>54</sup> which argues that the social structure of the Pauline churches reflects that of the surrounding urban society, and all levels are represented analogously to their urban environment, with the likely exception of the very top (Imperial leadership).<sup>55</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Friesen’s numbers do not account for the final 0.2% of the population. Longenecker argues convincingly that these numbers should be modified to 42% for the middle class, and 55% for the lower class, ‘Middle’, 264. Longenecker also profiles two upper-middle class groups, which would significantly expand Friesen’s fourth category, the *apparitores* and the *Augustales*, pp. 264-67. The percentages are debatable.

<sup>51</sup> This is an artificially created social structure, for purposes of social analysis, and is not claiming to be technically accurate in terms of the actual life experience of first century people. To speak of a technical ‘middle class’ social category in the ancient world is anachronistic, but this helps to highlight the social differences that clearly did exist within the masses of the lower classes (97-99% of the total population).

<sup>52</sup> Holmberg, *Sociology*, 28. This affirms Celsus’ infamous description of the early Christians as ‘wool-workers, cobblers, laundry-workers and the most bucolic and illiterate yokels... foolish and stupid, and neither know nor can perform anything that is really good, being preoccupied with empty trifles’, Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 3.55. This position was argued in the early 20<sup>th</sup> cent. by A. Deissmann, *Light From the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco Roman World*, L. Strachan, trans., 4<sup>th</sup> ed., rev. and enl. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1927; orig. 1910): 252-266, 290-300. He refers to primitive Christianity as ‘common’, and drawn from the ‘humble classes’, ‘humbly situated’, 385.

<sup>53</sup> This title was first given by A. J. Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977): 31.

<sup>54</sup> G. Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*, J. H. Schütz, ed., trans. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982); W. A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1983). Others have advocated this position, largely following E. A. Judge, *The Social Pattern of the Christian Groups in the First Century* (London: Tyndale, 1960), such as J. Becker, ‘Paul and His Churches’, *Christian Beginnings*, A. S. Kidder, R. Krauss, trans. (Westminster: John Knox, 1993): 163-72, who sees ‘the integration of people from all classes and ranks in society into the Christian house church’, 172; A. Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth* (Leiden: Brill, 1993); M. Hengel, *Property and Riches in the Early Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974); Malherbe, *Social Aspects*; C. Osiek, *What Are They Saying about the Social Setting of the New Testament?* (New York: Paulist, 1984); B. W. Winter, *Seek the Welfare of the City* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1994); B. Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995).

<sup>55</sup> Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 73; Malherbe, *Social Aspects*, 31; Judge, *Social Pattern*, 49-61; Theissen, *Social Setting*, 49-61.



Meeks argues that, 'A Pauline congregation generally reflected a fair cross-section of urban society,' and therefore the typical Christian would likely be a free artisan or small trader.<sup>56</sup>

This 'consensus' has dominated scholarly discussion for the last three decades. However, it has been challenged recently, and there is presently no consensus on the question.<sup>57</sup> It is safe to agree with Holmberg's assessment: 'The early Christian movement in Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy in the middle of the first century was not exclusively a movement among the poorest strata of society. This is important information that has repercussions on our whole understanding of first-century Christianity.'<sup>58</sup>

If the 'new consensus' is true, then it corroborates the thesis that the early church was universally inclusive, and that the εὐαγγέλιον was good news for all people, regardless of location, ethnicity, or status. However, it is derived from the Pauline letters, particularly 1 Corinthians.<sup>59</sup> Is there evidence of the church's inclusion of all the social classes in Acts?

### 6.3.2 The Underprivileged Lower Classes

Luke goes to great lengths in his Gospel to show Jesus' concern for the least, last, and lost.<sup>60</sup>

Jesus articulates his mission in Lk 4.18, and identifies four 'target groups': 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because [1] he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the *poor*

(εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς). [2] He has sent me to proclaim release to the *captives* (κηρύξαι

αἰχμαλώτοις ἄφεισιν), and [3] recovery of sight to the *blind* (τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν), [4] to set free

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<sup>56</sup> Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 73.

<sup>57</sup> See esp., J. J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998): 97-154, where he argues directly against the 'new consensus', and the idea that the first century church contained people from the elite classes. He deals with all the key passages upon which the arguments of the 'new consensus' are built: 1 Cor 1.26; 4.10; 8; 10; 11.17-34. See also, P. Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003): 178-182, 228-237.

<sup>58</sup> Holmberg, *Sociology*, 69.

<sup>59</sup> 1 Cor 1.26-28 is a launching point, for it implies that *some* of the members of the Corinthian congregation were educated, powerful, and originated from the upper classes. Theissen, *Social Setting*, 69-70.

<sup>60</sup> E.g., *the last* (ἔσχατοι): Lk 13.30, 'the last will be first'; 14.9-10; *the least* (μικρότεροι): Lk 7.28; 9.48, 'he who is least among all of you is the greatest'; *the sick* (κακῶς): Lk 4.40; 5.31, 'it is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick'; 7.2; 10.9; 14.13; *the lost* (τὸ ἀπολωλός): Lk 15; 19.10, 'the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost'; *the poor* (πτωχοῖ): Lk 4.18, 'He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor'; 6.20, 'blessed are the poor, for yours is the kingdom of God'; 7.22; 14.13,21; 16.19-31; 19.8; 21.1-3.

those who are *oppressed* (ἀποστεῖλαι τεθραυσμένους ἐν ἀφέσει).’ It is the Holy Spirit who empowers and anoints Jesus to minister to these groups, which are generally located at the bottom of society.<sup>61</sup> This focus continues in Acts, through Jesus’ people, the church.

### 6.3.2.1 The Poor

Luke states in an early summary passage that the early community in Acts cared for the needy among them to such an extent that, ‘there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales’ (4.34). The practice of selling property to care for the poor is indicative of the extent to which the *κοινωνία* followed in Jesus’ footsteps, practically providing for those in need.

This can also be seen in the choosing of the seven to serve the Hellenistic widows (6.1-7). There is a ‘daily distribution/service’ (τῆ διακονία τῆ καθημερινῆ) of food to the needy in the early church community (6.1), which demonstrates that the apostles are interested in caring for people’s material needs, as well as their spiritual needs. The apostles emphasize that the seven candidates must be of good reputation, full of the Spirit, and full of wisdom (6.3). This high standard, along with the formal commissioning that the seven receive (6.5), reveal the value the apostles place on this public ministry to the needy.<sup>62</sup>

The early church’s care for the poor is also seen in Tabitha’s story (Acts 9.36-42),<sup>63</sup> and particularly the background material about Tabitha’s life.<sup>64</sup> Luke says that Tabitha is

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<sup>61</sup> The poor are lower class by definition, as are most prisoners/captives. People spiritually oppressed could be drawn from any class, though in Luke’s worldview they would generally be lower class. The infirmed could be located on any part of the social spectrum, but someone with a long-term physical disability would likely suffer social ostracism and disgrace, making them more likely to be on the lower ends of the social spectrum.

<sup>62</sup> This story underscores the Judeo-Christian idea of charity, of giving without thought of return and being ‘gracious’ - grace/gift (*charis*, χάρις) is the root of charity. In the Greco-Roman world a gift set off a chain of reciprocity and usually one only gave to achieve personal honor or gain and only to those he or she thought would be able to reciprocate (whether that be money, votes, vocal support, etc.). See A. R. Hands, *Charities and Social Aid in Greece and Rome* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968): 64ff.

<sup>63</sup> Tabitha was a ‘female disciple’, a μαθήτρια, the only instance of this word in the NT, cf. Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives of the Philos.*, 4.5: ‘The female pupils of Plato, Lasthenea of Mantinea, and Axiothea of Phlius, are said to have become disciples...And one may learn philosophy too from your female disciple from Arcadia.’ B. Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988): 150.

<sup>64</sup> Tabitha is a person of some means, to be able to live as she does. The mention of the upper room in her house suggests a larger house, which may be a private place where the church meets (cf. Acts. 1.3,13; 20.8. See

‘continuously abounding with good works and giving alms/charity’ (αὕτη ἦν πλήρης ἔργων ἀγαθῶν καὶ ἐλεημοσυνῶν ὧν ἐποίει, 9.36). Tabitha makes tunics and garments for the widows (9.38), and has a specialized ongoing ministry to these poor women, which gains her special respect and honour within the church, as the details of her funeral and presentation back to the community show.<sup>65</sup> Luke is highlighting the value the church placed on caring for the poor and the needy in this story.

### 6.3.2.2 *The Sick*

Another facet of the lowly of any society is the sick,<sup>66</sup> and Luke shows that the Christian community cared for the ill through giving multiple examples in Acts:

- Peter and John heal the beggar crippled from birth at the temple gate Beautiful (3.1-10).<sup>67</sup>
- Peter heals Aeneas, a paralytic who had been bedridden for 8 years, in Lydda (9.32-35).
- Paul heals a man who had been lame from birth in Lystra (14.8-10).
- Paul heals Publius’ father on Malta, who is suffering from fever and dysentery (28.8-9).

There are also three summary passages in Acts about the sick. In Acts 5.15-16, Peter’s shadow heals the sick, and crowds gather, bringing many sick and demon possessed, and they are all healed.<sup>68</sup> In Acts 8.6-8, Philip heals many paralytics and lame people, resulting in ‘great joy in that city’.<sup>69</sup> In Acts 19.11-12, Paul’s handkerchiefs and aprons<sup>70</sup> cure many illnesses, and cause evil spirits to leave.<sup>71</sup>

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Barrett, *Acts*, 1.483). She may be a patroness or benefactor for the Christian community in Joppa, which explains why her loss is a serious blow to the Joppa church in general; see C. Keener, *Bible Background Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993): 349.

<sup>65</sup> Note the details of her funeral presentation (v. 37,39), and the way Peter ‘presents her alive’ (παρέστησεν αὐτήν ζῶσαν) to the Joppa community (v. 41). This did not happen in the previous story, the healing of Aeneas.

<sup>66</sup> This is particularly true of people with long-term, chronic illnesses or physical/mental disabilities. Many in the ancient world would have interpreted this as judgment from the gods, for an assumed sin. Cf. Jn 9.2-3.

<sup>67</sup> This first miracle of Acts comes just after the Pentecost narrative of ch. 2, in which the church is birthed and begins to dramatically grow. It parallels Jesus’ healing of the paralytic man in Lk 5.17-26, for that follows the calling of his first disciples (5.1-11), while this follows the first account of converts to the Christian movement.

<sup>68</sup> The idea of a person’s shadow being an extension of the soul or spiritual life force of a person was not uncommon in antiquity. Cf. Lk 1.35: ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you’. See P. van der Horst, ‘Peter’s Shadow: The Religio-Historical Background of Acts 5.15’, *NTS* 23 (1976-77): 204-212. The story is meant to impress upon Luke’s audience the astounding power that worked through Peter for healing; Polhill, *Acts*, 164: ‘So widespread was the fame of his healing powers... One is reminded of the woman who shared a similar hope that the fringe of Jesus’ garment might heal her (Lk 8.44)’.

<sup>69</sup> This happened at the hands of Philip, who is not an apostle, and it happened in Samaria, outside of Judea.

Luke demonstrates that a primary task of the early church was caring for and healing the sick, and he is offering this as an example to be followed by his readers. It is well documented from both Christian and pagan sources that Christians were known for doing this over the next centuries, even in times of widespread epidemics.<sup>72</sup>

### 6.3.2.3 *The Demonized*

The church's ministry to demonized or spiritually oppressed people is shown dramatically in Acts 8.6-8: 'With loud shrieks, evil spirits came out of many' (πνεύματα ἀκάθαρτα βοῶντα φωνῇ μεγάλῃ, 8.7a).<sup>73</sup> The exorcism of the girl with the 'python spirit' (πνεῦμα πύθωνος) is another example of this kind of ministry (Acts 16.16-18).<sup>74</sup> This is a slave-girl (παιδίσκην),

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<sup>70</sup> 'Handkerchiefs' (σουδάρια) refer to kerchiefs worn on the head (cf. Lk 19.20; Jn 11.44; 20.7), while 'aprons' (σιμικίνθια) refer to aprons, or possibly a belt. The image is that as Paul's reputation as a miracle worker spread, people came to see him while he was at work, and he would give them items of his clothing, used in his trade (as a leather worker or tentmaker, Acts 18.3). See Bruce, *Acts*, 410; P. Trebilco, 'Asia', *Acts in its Graeco-Roman Setting*, D. W. J. Gill, C. H. Gempf, eds., AIFCS 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994): 291-362, citing 313-14.

<sup>71</sup> The idea that the bodies of certain persons or animals and whatever touched them had powers was widespread in the ancient world. Cf. Plut., *Pyr.*, 3.4-5: 'People of a splenetic habit believed that he cured their ailment... while the patient lay flat upon his back, he would press gently with his right foot against the spleen... It is said, further, that the great toe of his right foot had a divine virtue, so that after the rest of his body had been consumed, this was found to be untouched and unharmed by the fire.'

<sup>72</sup> Stark argues that this was a key to Christianity's eventual triumph in the Roman world, 'Epidemics, Networks, and Conversion', *Rise of Christianity*, 73-94. He cites evidence from ancient literature, arguing that Christians were better able to explain why calamities occurred, and offer a hopeful future in the face of suffering, that their care for one another meant they were better able to cope, and therefore had higher survival rates, which also influenced conversion rates, and that substantial mortality rates would have resulted in the loss of social attachments, leading people to be more open to shift from largely pagan social networks to largely Christian social networks.

<sup>73</sup> This sort of deliverance ministry was commonplace in the ancient world, as evidenced by the story of the Seven Sons of Sceva, of whom Luke casually says, 'Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits' (19.13). On Jewish exorcists see Josephus, *Ant.* 8.42-49: 'God also enabled him to learn that skill which expels demons, which is a science useful and sanative to men... And he left behind him the manner of using exorcisms, by which they drive away demons, so that they never return... He put a ring that had a foot of one of those sorts mentioned by Solomon to the nostrils of the demoniac, after which he drew out the demon through his nostrils; and when the man fell down immediately, he adjured him to return into him no more, making still mention of Solomon, and reciting the incantations which he composed... he set a little way off a cup or basin full of water, and commanded the demon, as he went out of the man, to overturn it, and thereby to let the spectators know that he had left the man.' See J. M. Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition* (Naperville: Allenson, 1974); H. C. Kee, *Miracle in the Early Christian World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983). Witherington gives an overview of miracles and magic in antiquity and in Acts, *Acts*, 577-9.

<sup>74</sup> The girl has a πνεῦμα πύθωνα, a Python spirit, which means that she is inspired by Apollo, the Pythian deity. It was believed that Apollo was embodied at the oracle at Delphi by a Python. This 'Pythia' came to be associated with ventriloquism; cf. Plut., *De Defectu Oraculorum*, 9.414E: 'it is foolish and childish in the extreme to imagine that the god himself after the manner of ventriloquists (who used to be called "Eurycleis," but now "Pythones") enters into the bodies of his prophets and prompts their utterances, employing their mouths and voices as instruments.' This girl was in essence a fortune-teller, offering answers to questions people asked

and therefore a representative of the lower class, by virtue of her occupation. Paul exorcises the demon from her, even at the price of his own welfare (16.19-24).

Acts 19.11-12 says that after people were touched with Paul's handkerchiefs and aprons 'the evil spirits left them'. This was in Ephesus, which was widely known as the magic capital of Asia Minor,<sup>75</sup> and as a centre of occultism. Luke knew the implications of Christianity's triumph in Ephesus, and this would not have been lost on his readers. This supernatural confrontation between Paul's God and the pagan gods climaxes in the burning of the scrolls related to sorcery in Acts 19.18-20.<sup>76</sup> Luke goes to great rhetorical lengths to show that even in this haven of demonic activity, the word of God has superior authority.<sup>77</sup>

In ministering to demonized people early Christians were following in the footsteps of Christ, who performed multiple exorcisms in Luke's Gospel (e.g., Lk 4.33; 6.18; 7.21; 8.2,29; 9.42; 11.24). This is highlighted in Peter's summary of Jesus' ministry at Cornelius' house: 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the *Holy Spirit and power*, and he went around doing good and *healing all who were under the power of the devil* (ἰώμενος πάντας τοὺς καταδυναστευομένους ὑπὸ τοῦ διαβόλου), because God was with him' (Acts 10.38).

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about their futures, clearly a lucrative business for her owners. See J. Fontenrose, *The Delphic Oracle* (Berkeley: University Press of Cal., 1983): 10; also Barrett, *Acts*, 2.785.

<sup>75</sup> See C. E. Arnold, *Ephesians: Power and Magic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Cf. Philostratus, *Life*, 4.10: 'The beggar who had seemed to blink and be blind, gave them all a sudden glance and his eyes were full of fire. Then the Ephesians recognized that he was a demon, and they stoned him thoroughly...they found that he had disappeared and instead of him there was a hound who resembled in form and look a Molossian dog, but was in size the equal of the largest lion; there he lay before their eyes, pounded to a pulp by their stones and vomiting foam as mad dogs do.' The phrase 'Ephesian writings' (ἑθεστία γράμματα) was used for spells and magical formulas, recited by those possessed by demons; Plut., *Table Talk*, 7.5.706E: 'sorcerers advise those possessed by demons to recite and name over to themselves the Ephesian letters.' Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 5.242, who speaks of 'the Greeks as exceedingly addicted to the use of the method of concealment', and links this practice with the 'far-famed so-called Ephesian letters'.

<sup>76</sup> These books had a total value of fifty thousand drachmas, or silver pieces (19.19), which would be about fifty thousand days' pay for a day laborer. The practice of burning books that were seen as dangerous or subversive is well known in this era: Suetonius, *Augustus*, 31: 'he collected whatever prophetic writings of Greek or Latin origin were in circulation anonymously or under the names of authors of little repute, and burned more than two thousand of them'; Livy, 39.16: 'How often...has the task been assigned to the magistrates of...seeking out and burning all books of pretended prophecies, and abolishing every sacrificial ritual except what was accordant with Roman usage!'; 40.29.3-14: 'Lucius promised that he would throw the books into the fire...The books were burnt in the comitium in the sight of the people in a fire made by the victimarii'; Lucian, *Alexander*, 47: 'Coming across Epicurus's "Accepted Maxims"...he brought it into the middle of the market-place, there burned it on a fig-wood fire for the sins of its author, and cast its ashes into the sea. He issued an oracle on the occasion: "The dotard's maxims to the flames be given."' See Trebilco, 'Asia', 314-15.

<sup>77</sup> As indicated by the final result: 'In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power' (19.20).

#### 6.3.2.4 Care for the Disadvantaged Lower Classes

Luke emphasizes the inclusion of the lower classes throughout Acts. This practice flowed directly out of Christian ethics, and was a catalyst to mission and growth, as Stark explains:

The truly revolutionary aspect of Christianity lay in moral imperatives such as 'Love one's neighbor as oneself', 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you,' 'It is more blessed to give than to receive,' and 'When you did it to the least of my brethren, you did it unto me.' These were not just slogans. Members did nurse the sick, even during epidemics; they did support orphans, widows, the elderly, and the poor; they did concern themselves with the lot of slaves. In short, Christians created 'a miniature welfare state in an empire which for the most part lacked social services'.<sup>78</sup>

The consistent example that Luke paints of the early Christians' care for the disadvantaged lower classes must have provided a challenging and inspiring example for Acts' readers to emulate.<sup>79</sup> In Acts the underprivileged of society, though rejected by others, were welcome in the Jesus movement. The εὐαγγέλιον was good news for the lower classes.

#### 6.3.3 Excursus – Women and Gender Inclusion in Acts

Even though men outnumbered women in the Roman Empire,<sup>80</sup> women represented a significant percentage of the total population. They also represented a 'social bridge' between upper and lower class. There is much debate about the social status of women in the ancient world, and also about their treatment and inclusion in Acts.<sup>81</sup>

##### 6.3.3.1 Women in the Ancient World

Luke's treatment of women must be understood relative to how women were treated in the wider culture of the first century Greco-Roman world. There are studies on the roles of

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<sup>78</sup> Stark, *Cities of God*, 30-31, quoting P. Johnson, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Atheneum, 1976): 75.

<sup>79</sup> It seems that they did. In 362, as Emperor Julian attempted to revitalize paganism, he wrote a letter to a pagan priest: 'Why do we not observe that it is their *benevolence to strangers*...and the *pretended holiness* of their lives that have done most to increase atheism...For it is disgraceful that...*the impious Galileans support not only their own poor but ours as well*, all men see that our people lack aid from us.' R. M. Novak, *Christianity and the Roman Empire: Background Texts* (Harrisburg: Trinity Intl., 2001): 181-3.

<sup>80</sup> J. C. Russell estimated that in Rome there were 131 males per 100 females, and that in Italy, Asia Minor, and N. Africa the ratio was 140 males per 100 females (this is slightly later than the first century), a ratio that he claims is only possible when there is 'some tampering with human life', *Late Ancient and Medieval Populations* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1958): 14. This 'tampering' was probably the practice of female infanticide by exposure, a common practice. Families with more than one daughter were rare: of 600 families at Delphi, only 6 had more than one daughter, J. Lindsay, *The Ancient World: Manners and Morals* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1968): 168. Lindsay gives multiple literary examples, and explains, 'until a child had been ritually made a part of the family, it was not considered a person, a human being'.

<sup>81</sup> A brief summary can be found in Witherington, *Acts*, 334-339. See also R. I. Reimer, *Women in the Acts of the Apostles: A Feminist Liberation Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).

Jewish women in the Diaspora during the Empire,<sup>82</sup> about non-Jewish women in the Greco-Roman world,<sup>83</sup> and about the structure of Roman and Greek families during the Empire.<sup>84</sup>

All of these have uncovered evidence of women in positions of prestige within ancient society.<sup>85</sup> Women were generally not as influential as men, though there are multiple notable exceptions, where women held positions of power in the Roman world.<sup>86</sup>

### 6.3.3.2 Women in Acts

Some recent scholars conclude that Luke treats women quite negatively,<sup>87</sup> while others are more positive.<sup>88</sup> In the text of Acts there are five cameos of principal Christian women and

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<sup>82</sup> B. J. Brooten, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogues* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1982); A.-J. Levine, ed. *“Women Like This”: New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1991). Cf. D. Irvin, ‘The Ministry of Women in the Early Church: The Archaeological Evidence’, *Duke Divinity Review* 45 (1980): 76-86, for archaeological evidence of women in important roles in the first century, including inscriptions with *archisynagogos*, *presbytera* and *episcopa*, referring to women in ordained ministry, and the ‘Fractio Panis’ fresco (late 1<sup>st</sup> cent.), picturing a group of women celebrating the Eucharist.

<sup>83</sup> There is inscriptional evidence from the Empire of both Roman and Greek women as patronesses, benefactors, business owners, priests, civic and federal magistrates, etc. R. S. Kraemer, ‘Women in the Religions of the Greco-Roman World’, *RSR* 9 (1983): 127-39; E. Cantarella, *Pandora’s Daughters* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987); A. J. Marshall, ‘Roman Women in the Provinces’, *Ancient Society* 6 (1975): 108-27; R. MacMullen, ‘Women in Public in the Roman Empire’, *Historia* 29 (1980): 208-18. Because of the prevalence of the patronage system, anyone (including women) who had the money to become a patron(ess) could obtain power and authority in their place of residence. Cf. R. P. Saller, *Personal Patronage under the Early Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); E. A. Judge, *Rank and Status in the World of the Caesars and St. Paul* (Christchurch: University Press of Canterbury, 1982), who examines the extensive papyrological evidence; and P. Garnsey, *Social Status and Legal Privilege in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970).

<sup>84</sup> This is an important point of comparison for evaluating what Luke has to say about households, house churches, and household codes. B. Rawson, ed., *The Family in Ancient Rome: New Perspectives* (London: Croom Helm, 1986); K. R. Bradley, *Discovering the Roman Family: Studies in Social History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); D. B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

<sup>85</sup> Recent work has shown that a woman’s status in ancient society largely depended on her social context; elite women had a greater degree of autonomy and influence, particularly in the households, C. Osiek, M. Y. MacDonald, *A Woman’s Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006). See also, C. Osiek, ‘Women, Honor, and Context in Mediterranean Antiquity’ *HTS* 64 (2008): 323-37, which nuances the argument that men automatically received honor, and women received shame in ancient cultures, and argues that social context is the most significant determiner of this process.

<sup>86</sup> Recent evidence has shown that women did hold key positions outside of the church within the Greco-Roman world. A number of inscriptions ranging in date from the first to the third centuries C.E. attest the prominent role played in the life of the cities of Asia Minor by wealthy Greek women, a number of whom held the Roman citizenship. These women held distinguished civic and federal magistracies and priesthoods, discharged liturgies which required lavish expenditure on various ceremonies, games, banquets and on civic buildings such as baths and colonnades. The offices which they held include federal positions such as *Pontarch* and *Lyciarch*, posts in the imperial cult such as *arch-priestess*, and civic posts such as *demiurge*, *agonothete*, *gymnasiarch*, *panegyriarch*, *archon*...and even *happarchos*, *strategos*, or *dekaprotos*. The extent of their services may be seen from the awards of statues, crowns, and titles such as “*patroness*” or “*foundress*” which they regularly received’, Marshall, ‘Roman Women’, 123, citing the relevant inscriptions.

<sup>87</sup> J. Jervell, ‘The Daughters of Abraham: Women in Acts’, *The Unknown Paul* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984): 146-57, argues that Luke portrays women as living up to all the traditional expectations of withdrawn submission in the patriarchal structure of the culture, with no more freedoms than any other religious setting. E.

the roles that they played.<sup>89</sup> *Mary*, the mother of John Mark, is a patroness and benefactor to the early Christian community in Jerusalem (Acts 12.12-17).<sup>90</sup> *Lydia* becomes the patroness of the Christian community in Philippi (Acts 16.12-40).<sup>91</sup> The Philippi narrative climaxes with Paul's final Christian meeting in Lydia's house, which was a strategic venue for outreach into that Roman colony.<sup>92</sup> *Tabitha* (Acts 9.36-43) is a notable female disciple (μαθήτρια) who has an influential ministry to Christian widows. Luke mentions *Philip the evangelist's four daughters*, who are prophetesses (προφητεύουσαι - 21.8-9).<sup>93</sup> Luke's most eminent characters are called prophets or prophetesses;<sup>94</sup> Luke uses this terminology to refer to a select group of church leaders, including these women.<sup>95</sup> Finally, there is Luke's reference to

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S. Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her* (New York: Crossroad, 1983): 49f., 161, 167, says that Luke's presentation of women has contributed to the 'conspiracy of silence' and invisibility surrounding prominent women in the early Christian movement. Reimer, *Women*, 252, concludes that Luke has suppressed stories about women who were early Christian leaders, such as Thecla or Mary Magdalene.

<sup>88</sup> 'Luke's version of the life of Jesus and of the first believers cannot be reduced either to a feminist treasure chamber or to a chamber of horrors for women's theology. It contains elements that bring joy to "dignity studies" and other elements that give support to "misery studies"... The Lukan construction contains a double, mixed message', T. K. Seim, *The Double Message: Patterns of Gender in Luke and Acts* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 249. Cf. A. J. Levine, ed., *A Feminist Companion to Luke* (London: Sheffield Academic, 2002), which contains multiple articles on women in Luke's Gospel, containing both positive and negative portrayals of women, and epitomizing the contrasting perspectives on this complex question.

<sup>89</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 338, highlights these five significant women in the Acts' narrative.

<sup>90</sup> The reference to 'many' gathering in her household (12.12) suggests a house of considerable size, as do the references to a courtyard gate and a female gatekeeper (Rhoda). It seems that this was a regular meeting place of the church in Jerusalem. Could this have been the location of the upper room where the Last Supper was held (Mk 14.13-15; Acts 1.13), and/or the place of prayer of Acts 4.31?

<sup>91</sup> Lydia, a dealer of purple cloth from Thyatira, is portrayed as a person of significant social importance and means. Such women were not unusual in Macedonia, which had allowed women important social, political, and religious roles since at least the Hellenistic era: W. D. Thomas, 'The Place of Women in the Church at Philippi', *ET* 83 (1971-72): 117-20; Marshall, 'Roman Women', 108-27; J. Wiseman, 'A Distinguished Macedonian Family of the Roman Imperial Period', *AJA* 88 (1984): 567-82.

<sup>92</sup> Paul needed to find a venue in Philippi where Christians could meet and fellowship. Lydia's home served as a base for mission and outreach, and was thus crucial to the existence and growth of Christianity in Philippi. Roman antipathy to any religion that threatened the traditional gods was considerable. If Jews were forced to meet outside the city gate in Philippi (16.13), Christians would not have fared much better apart from a wealthy sponsor. The use of Lydia's home gave credibility to this new movement, and caused it to be seen more like a club or society, which commonly met in large homes, rather than a foreign cult. See Witherington, *Acts*, 487.

<sup>93</sup> This fulfils the prophecy of Joel Peter re-interpreted in Acts 2.17: 'Your sons *and daughters* will prophesy.'

<sup>94</sup> E.g., John the Baptist, Jesus, Peter, Paul, Agabus, Elizabeth, Mary, Anna, Philip's daughters. Luke sees these prophets and prophetesses as both discerning the fulfillment of OT prophecies by the Spirit's insight (cf. Acts 2), and giving new predictive prophecies (cf. Acts 11.28; 21.11; 27.10, 23-24, 31, 34).

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Acts 15.22, 32: these prophets point to another prophetic function, which is to 'encourage and strengthen' the church. See E. E. Ellis, 'The Role of the Christian Prophet in Acts', *Apostolic History and the Gospel*, W. W. Gasque, R. P. Martin, eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970): 55-67.



*Priscilla* as the female teacher of a notable Christian evangelist, Apollos (Acts 18.24-26).<sup>96</sup>

Luke's portrayal of Priscilla as a Pauline co-worker is entirely positive, implying that he approves of women engaging in this type of ministry.<sup>97</sup>

That Luke portrays women performing these functions in the early church shows his sensitivity to the role of women in the advancing Christian movement. In addition, Luke specifically mentions women being converted or serving the Christian mission in Jerusalem (1.14; 12.12-17), Joppa (9.36-42), Philippi (16.11-15), Thessalonica (17.4), Berea (17.12), Athens (17.34), Corinth (18.1-3), and Ephesus (18.19-26). Luke also mentions many women by name,<sup>98</sup> and emphasizes their speaking ministries as prophets and teachers.<sup>99</sup>

How common this sort of involvement and influence was for women in the larger culture is uncertain. Witherington suggests that Luke, 'shows how the Gospel liberates and creates new possibilities for women... we find women being converted or serving the Christian community in roles that would not have been available to them apart from that community.'<sup>100</sup> Similarly, Meeks observes, 'Women...are Paul's fellow workers as evangelists and teachers. Both in terms of their positions in the larger society and in terms of their participation in the Christian communities, then, a number of women broke through the normal expectations of female roles.'<sup>101</sup> This may be nuanced by the findings of more recent research, but it seems that the early church in Acts did treat women with respect, and was

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<sup>96</sup> In nearly every reference to Priscilla and Aquila, Priscilla's name is first (Acts 18.18,26; Rom 16.3; 2 Tim 4.19). This suggests a higher status, or greater prominence in the church. The Western text omits Priscilla in vv. 3,18,21, and places Aquila's name first in v. 26, implying that he led in teaching Apollos.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. John Chrysostom, the first great commentator of the book of Acts: 'He sailed to Syria...and with him Priscilla - Lo, a woman also - and Aquila. But these he left at Ephesus with good reason, namely that they should teach.' G. B. Stevens, *The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom on the Acts of the Apostles*, J. Walker, J. Sheppard, H. Browne, trans., rev., with notes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975): 145.

<sup>98</sup> D. Schaps, 'The Women Least Mentioned: Etiquette and Women's Names', *CQ* 27 (1977): 323-30, has shown that women who were normally mentioned in public by name were women of questionable reputation, women connected with the speaker's opponent, and dead women, while reputable women were excluded. In contrast, Luke mentions multiple women, making known their important contributions to the movement.

<sup>99</sup> MacMullen, 'Women in Public', 208-18, points out that women are rarely found in roles which involve public speaking; therefore they can be seen but are not to be heard.

<sup>100</sup> Witherington, *Women*, 156-7. This may be slightly overstated and/or outdated, for recent evidence has shown that women did have some important positions outside of the church. However, participation in Mithraism, one of early Christianity's chief religious competitors, was restricted to males.

<sup>101</sup> Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 71.

willing to swim against the prevailing cultural norms in such matters.<sup>102</sup> In Acts Luke is advocating the universal and equal inclusion of men and women in the church's mission.

### 6.3.4 *The Privileged Middle and Upper Classes*

For the gospel to be universal, it must be for those on the lower end of the social ladder *and* for those on the upper end. Luke is eager to show how the good news is for the oppressor as well as the oppressed, for those with money and power and influence as well as those with none. This is a theme in Luke's Gospel.<sup>103</sup>

#### 6.3.4.1 *Examples of Middle and Upper Classes in Acts*

Luke continues to show the gospel reaching the upper classes in Acts, such as in Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8.26-40).<sup>104</sup> This man is described as a man of power, an official of Candace, queen of Ethiopia (δυνάστης Κανδάκης τῆς βασιλισσῆς), who is 'in charge of all her treasure' (ὅς ἦν ἐπὶ πάσης τῆς γάζης αὐτῆς, 8.27), as her chief financial officer.<sup>105</sup> That this eunuch is reading is another indication of his status,<sup>106</sup> along with his

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<sup>102</sup> Stark, *Rise of Christianity*, 103-15, argues that 'Christian women did indeed enjoy considerably greater status and power than did pagan women', particularly in the family and the religious community. In the family, because Christians generally did not condone infanticide, valued marital fidelity, did not pressure widows to remarry, and allowed them to marry at a much older age, and have more choice in selecting their spouse. In the Christian congregations, because of the abundant scriptural and patristic evidence of women exercising leadership functions, the significant proportion of female Christian martyrs (indicative of their high standing), and because of their superior gender ratio in the first five centuries within the church. Stark hardly mentions the many prominent women we now know of within society, but outside of the church.

<sup>103</sup> Jesus eats with Levi and many other tax collectors (Lk 5.29), and with Simon the Pharisee, a householder (Lk 7.36; cf. 11.37; 14.1). Jesus befriends Zacchaeus, a tax collector and 'wealthy' (πλούσιος) man (Lk 19.1ff). He points out that there is more faith in a Roman centurion, a representative of the emperor Caesar, than in all of the Jews, God's chosen people (Lk 7.1-10). He calls an 'exceedingly rich' (πλούσιος σφόδρα) young ruler to follow him (Lk 18.18-23).

<sup>104</sup> The word εὐνοῦχος normally refers to a man who has been castrated and often also dismembered. It was common to castrate those who were in charge of a king's harem, or who had duties regularly involving close contact with the queen. This would have meant that this man could not have become a full proselyte to Judaism even if he wanted to, for he could not be properly circumcised. Therefore he falls into the fringe category of a God-fearer of some description. Keener, *Bible Background*, 346, points out that Jews were opposed to the practice, and Jewish law excluded eunuchs from Israel (Deut 23.1), though 'God could certainly accept even foreign eunuchs' (Isa 56.3-5; Jer 38.7-13); Marshall, *Acts*, 160-162; Wilson, *Gentile Mission*, 171, no. 5. For ancient literary evidence that circumcision was required in the first century to become a full Jewish convert, see J. J. Collins, 'A Symbol of Otherness: Circumcision and Salvation in the First Century', *To See Ourselves as Others See Us*, J. Neusner, E. S. Frerichs, eds. (Chico: Scholars, 1985): 163-86.

<sup>105</sup> Δυνάστης implies a ruler or officer of great authority and might. That he is in charge of all of the queen of Ethiopia's finances/treasures (ἦν ἐπὶ πάσης τῆς γάζης αὐτῆς) is an indicator of his status in his home country.

ownership of a scroll of Isaiah and a traveling chariot which could seat at least three people.<sup>107</sup> Finally, the eunuch's elegant Greek is a clue to his social status.<sup>108</sup>

Another person of higher social status in Acts is Cornelius, a centurion in the Italian Regiment (Acts 10.1-11.18).<sup>109</sup> Centurions were persons of importance in antiquity.<sup>110</sup> Luke presents Cornelius as a pious and devout person (εὐσεβής), a 'God-fearer' (φοβούμενος τὸν Θεόν) who prays constantly and gives alms (10.2).<sup>111</sup> His career as a centurion provides upward social mobility, and Luke emphasizes that the Spirit directs the early church to reach out not just to the lowly, but also to those on the upper ends of the social strata of society.

There are multiple other references to people of influence in Acts. In Antioch there is Manaen, 'who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch' (Μαναήν τε Ἡρώδου τοῦ τετράρχου σύντροφος, 13.1).<sup>112</sup> In Cyprus, the local proconsul (ἀνθυπατος) Sergius Paulus is converted (13.7-12).<sup>113</sup> In Thessalonica, 'a number of the leading women (γυναικῶν τε τῶν πρώτων)' are converted (17.4).<sup>114</sup> In Berea 'a number of prominent Greek women and men'

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<sup>106</sup> He was reading aloud, as was almost always the case in an oral culture. Scrolls had no word separation, and had to be read syllable by syllable to understand where the divisions came. See P. J. Achtemeier, 'Omne verbum sonat: The New Testament and Oral Environment of Late Western Antiquity,' *JBL* 109 (1990): 10, 16.

<sup>107</sup> The eunuch, a driver, and Philip. Cf. Bruce, *Acts*, 227; Marshall, *Acts*, 162.

<sup>108</sup> His response in v. 31, 'How could I be able unless someone will guide me', is elegant, and uses the optative mood (expressing a wish or hope) with εἴν, a sign of education or conscious style, Barrett, *Acts*, 1.428. Luke uses the optative in other 'educated' speeches, such as the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers (17.18), and Paul before Agrippa and Festus (26.29).

<sup>109</sup> He may be named after P. Cornelius Sulla, the Roman general who in 82 BCE freed 10,000 slaves who then took his name. This Cornelius may be the descendant of one of those freedmen. Witherington, *Acts*, 346.

<sup>110</sup> A centurion (ἐκατοντάρχης) commanded a unit of about 100 men. The Roman legion (6,000 men) was divided into ten regiments of 600 men, each of which had a designation; this was the Italian, others were the Imperial, or the Augustan (Acts 27.1). A centurion commanded a sixth of a regiment (100 men), and provided stability to the entire Roman military system. T. R. S. Broughton, 'The Roman Army', *The Beginnings of Christianity*, K. Lake & H. J. Cadbury, eds. (London: MacMillan, 1920-1933): 5.441-3.

<sup>111</sup> Every centurion mentioned in the NT has noble qualities (Mt 27.54; Lk 7.1-10; Acts 22.25-26; 27.1,6,11,31, 43). Many NT writers were eager to show that neither Jesus nor his followers were antagonistic towards the Roman presence in the East, and that some influential Roman soldiers even found Christianity appealing.

<sup>112</sup> Σύντροφος literally means that this man had the same wet nurse as Herod Antipas, but it was also a common word to refer to an intimate friend, in this case a friend in the court (cf. 1 Mac 1.6; 2 Mac 9.29). Manaen could have been a source of information for Luke about the Herods. Witherington, *Acts*, 165ff, 392.

<sup>113</sup> Σέργιος Παῦλος the proconsul (ἀνθυπατος) was the governor of the senatorial province of Cyprus, which was ruled by a civil administration, Schnabel, *Mission*, 2.1083. He would thus be in the local elite classes.

<sup>114</sup> It is possible that γυναικῶν τε τῶν πρώτων refers to wives of leading men, and the Western text reads this way, omitting the τε and adding καί, Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 453. There is an anti-feminist tendency in the D text (see 1.14; 17.12; 18.26), which is at odds with Luke's own attempts to highlight the roles of women;

believe (τῶν Ἑλληνίδων γυναικῶν τῶν εὐσχημόνων καὶ ἀνδρῶν, 17.12).<sup>115</sup> In Athens Dionysius the Areopagite is converted (Διονύσιος ὁ Ἀρεοπαγίτης, 17.34).<sup>116</sup> In Corinth Crispus the synagogue ruler (Κρίσπος ὁ ἀρχισυνάγωγος) is converted, along with his family (18.8).<sup>117</sup> Apollos is in Ephesus, ‘a learned/eloquent man, with a mighty knowledge of the Scriptures’ (ἀνὴρ λόγιος...δυνατὸς ὢν ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς, 18.24).<sup>118</sup> In Ephesus, Paul has friends (φίλοι) amongst the elite Asiarchs (Ἀσιάρχαι, 19.31).<sup>119</sup> Though Peter and John are ‘uneducated and untrained men’ (4.13),<sup>120</sup> Paul is an educated man, trained under Gamaliel, and a Roman citizen (22.3).<sup>121</sup> This would likely place Paul at least in the middle class of society, though his work as a ‘leatherworker’ is less than aristocratic.<sup>122</sup>

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see Witherington, ‘The Anti-Feminist Tendencies of the Western Text in Acts’, *JBL* 103 (1984): 82-4. Schaps, ‘Women Least Mentioned’, 72, gives evidence that ‘first of women’ may be an honorary title.

<sup>115</sup> *Εὐσχημόνων* means proper, noble or honorable, and indicates prominent status. Though it follows the word women, it likely also refers to the men mentioned last. That the high-status women are mentioned first probably suggests that more of them converted. The anti-feminist tendency in D can be seen here as well.

<sup>116</sup> Membership in the Athenian Areopagus would indicate extremely high social standing in Athens. According to later church tradition, this Dionysius became the first bishop of Athens; Eusebius, *HE*, 3.4.11: ‘Besides these, that Areopagite, named Dionysius, who was the first to believe after Paul’s address to the Athenians in the Areopagus (as recorded by Luke in the Acts) is...the first bishop of the church at Athens’; 4.23.3: ‘Dionysius the Areopagite, who was converted to the faith by the apostle Paul, according to the statement in the Acts of the Apostles, first obtained the episcopate of the church at Athens.’

<sup>117</sup> Converting an ἀρχισυνάγωγος would have led to others following suit. Cf. 1 Cor 1.14-16, Crispus’ baptism.

<sup>118</sup> Ἀνὴρ λόγιος could mean that Apollos was a learned man (the classical usage), or an eloquent man, trained in rhetoric. Keener, *Bible Background*, 377, suggests it means ‘formally skilled in rhetoric, the more practical form of advanced learning to which well-to-do pupils could attain (the other was philosophy).’

<sup>119</sup> The Ἀσιάρχαι are high officials of the city who introduce motions in the assemblies of the city council, dedicate buildings, build statues and organize festivals and games; Schnabel, *Mission*, 1225. It is unclear whether they are Christians, but Luke implies that they are friendly towards Paul and the Ephesian church. Paul’s acquaintance with them is surely the result of his missionary work in Ephesus.

<sup>120</sup> Ἀγράμματοι usually refers to one who is ‘without letters’ or illiterate; see Xen., *Mem.*, 4.2.20: ‘he who knows letters is more literate than *he who is ignorant of them*’; Plut., *Apophth. Reg.*, 186A: ‘an illiterate country fellow came to him...’; and Van der Horst, ‘Hellenistic Parallels’, 42. Here it probably has a more limited meaning, one not trained in the law, not a Torah scribe. Ἰδιῶται is related to ‘idiot’, and refers to a person who is ignorant, rude, or unlearned. The Jerusalem authorities are shocked by their boldness and eloquent speech, given this uneducated background.

<sup>121</sup> Gamaliel was the most honoured rabbi of his time, and possibly the grandson of Hillel (Mt 19.3; Acts 5.34-40). Keener summarizes Paul’s probable childhood education: ‘As a son in an educated and perhaps aristocratic home (his father being a citizen; cf. also 9.1), Paul probably began to learn the Law around his fifth year and other Pharisaic traditions around his tenth year, and was sent to pursue training to be able to teach the Law sometime after turning thirteen’, *Bible Background*, 389.

<sup>122</sup> Paul was clearly an artisan, or manual worker, later in life (σκηνοποιός, Acts 18.3, ‘leatherworker’, not necessarily tentmaker; Bruce, *Acts*, 343; Haenchen, *Acts*, 534), and speaks of arduous physical labour (1 Cor 4.11-12; 9.6; 2 Cor 11.27; 1 Thes 2.9; 2 Thes 3.7-8). Cf. Meggitt, *Paul*, 75. This may not have been due to his social status, but to his chosen occupation as a traveling missionary. Cf. R. F. Hock, *The Social Context of Paul’s Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980): 35.

In all of these, Luke's recipient, Theophilus might have recognized himself, for as Luke's patron he also probably had his origin in the upper middle classes.<sup>123</sup> There are multiple others of some social status mentioned throughout the narrative of Acts, such as Barnabas, a land-owner (4.36-37), Lydia, a home-owner (16.13-15,40), and Tabitha (9.36-43). 'Christianity seems to have been especially successful among women. It was often through the wives that it penetrated the upper classes of society in the first instance.'<sup>124</sup>

### 6.3.5 *The Εὐαγγέλιον for Every Social Status*

Luke stresses the social universality of the gospel message and the mission of the early church throughout Luke-Acts. The εὐαγγέλιον reaches the lowest of the low, and also those of higher social classes, and there are many examples in both categories.<sup>125</sup> For Luke, the εὐαγγέλιον and the σωτηρία it offers are for everyone, no matter what their social status or class background is. This comports with the 'new consensus', which maintains that the churches were composed of people from every social spectrum of the cities in which they were located. This is how Luke understood the early church, and by implication, the way he thought it should be in his day and beyond. This would not have been lost on his readers.

The theme of universality is found in the way the Christian mission is made available to all kinds of people, whether powerful or weak, wealthy or poor, male or female: the message is constantly enunciated through proclamation or through merciful action, to poor widows (9.39) and provincials (14.15-18) and merchants (16.14), and jailers (16.30-32), and sailors (27.25) as well as powerful military officers (10.34-38), proconsuls (13.7), governors (24.10), kings (26.2), and philosophers (17.18).<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 64-65.

<sup>124</sup> H. Chadwick, *The Early Church* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1967): 56. P. R. L. Brown noticed that 'women were prominent' among upper-class Christians and that 'such women could influence their husbands to protect the church', *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988): 151. Osiek & MacDonald, *A Woman's Place*, discuss multiple examples of prominent female leaders of households and Christian assemblies, 144-63, female patrons in the Christian house churches, 194-219, and women as agents of missional expansion in the early church, 220-43. There is a similar trend in ancient Judaism; women were pivotal figures in Jewish conversion, largely owing to the circumcision requirements, J. Crossley, *Why Christianity Happened* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006): 163-67.

<sup>125</sup> This underscores the reality that T. M. Finn has maintained, that early Christianity, 'spread in the packs of migrant Christians who traveled the great trade routes which laced the Empire...[And] it spread upward in the Empire's system of social stratification on the backs of Christians who traveled the major avenues of social mobility, specifically, careers in the legions, in servile and liberal education, and in imperial civil service (*familia Caesaris*)', 'The God-Fearers Reconsidered', *CBQ* 47 (1985): 75-84, citing 75.

<sup>126</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 17.

Luke's all-encompassing universally inclusive theology directly influenced the mission of the early church. The knowledge that the message which early Christians carried was applicable and relevant to every person they came across, regardless of geographic, ethnic, or social location, was a primary stimulus for evangelism. The εὐαγγέλιον was for everyone, and there was an urgency which this realization created to actually carry and communicate it to everyone, that they might experience the σωτηρία offered to them. Inspiring his generation of readers to involve themselves in the ongoing mission of the church is one of Luke's fundamental goals in Acts, and his universal theology is a notable aspect of this missional agenda. Similarly, σωτηρία also has universal implications of its own in Acts.

#### **6.4 Soteriologic Universality (Salvation for the Entire Person)**

Luke not only emphasizes that the εὐαγγέλιον is for every person, everywhere, but he argues that the σωτηρία it offers is for the entire person, and will affect every aspect of their lives.<sup>127</sup>

Luke's soteriology has social, moral, mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual dimensions, improving the well-being of the entire person who experiences it.<sup>128</sup>

##### **6.4.1 Salvation in the Ancient World**

Ancient pagan religion had little interest in 'eternal life', or being 'saved' in the Christian sense: 'The "salvation" most ancients looked for was salvation from disease, disaster, or death in this life, and the "redemption" many pagans cried out for was redemption from the social bondage of slavery...Pagan religion, even when the subject of salvation did come up, was decidedly this-worldly in its focus, aims, and perceived benefits.'<sup>129</sup> MacMullen says, 'assurances of immortality prove unexpectedly hard to find in the evidence. Even the longing

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<sup>127</sup> This is a different kind of universality; it is for all parts of a person, universal in its impact on a person's life.

<sup>128</sup> This section largely follows Witherington's analysis of the concept of salvation in Luke-Acts, *Acts*, 143-44, 821-43 [also ch.8, in Marshall & Peterson, eds., *Witness to the Gospel*].

<sup>129</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 821. "'Savior"...or "salvation" had to do with health or other matters of this earth, not of the soul for life eternal', R. MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981): 57.

for it is not much attested.<sup>130</sup> This is also true of the mystery religions,<sup>131</sup> and generally of ancient Judaism.<sup>132</sup> The Hebrew words for salvation and deliverance, ‘seldom, if ever, express a spiritual state *exclusively*: their common theological sense in Hebrew is that of a *material deliverance attended by spiritual blessings* (e.g., Isa 12.2; 45.17).’<sup>133</sup>

#### 6.4.2 Natural Conceptions of Salvation in Luke-Acts

Luke is familiar with natural conceptions of salvation, and employs them, using σῶζω in the sense of rescue, heal, deliver, and keep safe frequently throughout Luke-Acts.<sup>134</sup> For Luke, God’s salvation has unquestionable worldly implications (Acts 27.34).<sup>135</sup> Luke uses the word to refer to physical healings (4.9).<sup>136</sup> He also speaks of rescue or deliverance as ‘salvation’, something that would be very familiar to both Jews and Greeks (7.25; 27.20).<sup>137</sup>

<sup>130</sup> MacMullen, *Paganism*, 53, although Judaism clearly had substantial discussion of the afterlife by the first century. For a study of the σῶζω/σωτηρία word group, see W. Foerster, G. Fohrer, ‘σῶζω/σωτηρία’, *TDNT* 7 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971): 965-1024.

<sup>131</sup> Such as the cult of Isis and Serapis, or the enthusiasm for Mithra. D. W. J. Gill, ‘Behind the Classical Façade: Local Religions of the Roman Empire’, *One God, One Lord: Christianity in a World of Religious Pluralism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., A. D. Clarke, B. W. Winter, eds. (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1992): 86-100, gives an introduction to Egyptian deities, various mystery cults, and the cults of Asia Minor and Syria; cf. R. L. Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Knopf, 1987): 64-261; and MacMullen, *Paganism*.

<sup>132</sup> There is no reference to purely religious, spiritual or eternal benefits of σωτηρία in Josephus. Normally in the OT salvation amounts to this-worldly events, such as being kept safe, well, healed, or rescued or delivered from enemies. Forgiveness of sins is a familiar concept in the OT, but it is never called salvation (though Ps 32 links forgiveness and deliverance from danger). Isa 45.21-23 may begin to point towards conversion.

<sup>133</sup> S. R. Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text and Topography of the Books of Samuel*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913): 119. Driver explains that the meaning of Hebrew words such as ישועה (*yeshuah*) and תשועה (*teshuah*) was enlarged to include spiritual blessings over time in these passages, but this was never their exclusive meaning. For Luke’s Jewish contemporaries, such as Josephus, σῶζω/σωτηρία and their cognates ‘are not theologically freighted terms’, Foerster & Fohrer, ‘σῶζω’, 987.

<sup>134</sup> Σῶζω occurs 17 times in 15 verses in Lk: 6.9; 7.50; 8.12,36,48,50; 9.24; 13.23; 17.19; 18.26,42; 19.10; 23.35,37,39; and 13 times in Acts: 2.21,40,47; 4.9,12; 11.14; 14.9; 15.1,11; 16.30,31; 27.20,31. Of these, Lk 6.9; 8.36,48,50; 9.24; 17.19; 18.42; 23.35,37,39; Acts 4.9; 14.9; 27.20,31 are ‘natural’, unspiritual, references.

<sup>135</sup> In Acts 27.34 Paul urges his storm-battered fellow travelers to eat, for it is necessary for their σωτηρία, their survival, preservation, or safety. This is clearly the mundane sense of health and well-being. See Bruce, *Acts*, 524-525; Thuc., *Hist.*, 3.59.1: ‘It were not to your glory, Lacedaemonians...to kill us your benefactors to gratify another’s hatred without having been wronged yourselves: it were more so to *spare/save* us and to yield to the impressions of a reasonable compassion; reflecting not merely on the awful fate in store for us, but also on the character of the sufferers, and on the impossibility of predicting how soon misfortune may fall even upon those who deserve it not’; Heb 11.7 speaks of Noah preparing an ark for his household’s *survival* (σωτηρίαν).

<sup>136</sup> In Acts 4.9 Peter uses the verb to refer to a physical healing (σέσωσται), as the reference to sickness shows. Jesus often uses in this sense in Luke’s Gospel (the hemorrhaging woman, 8.48; the leper, 17.19; the blind man, 18.42), but after Pentecost σῶζω never involves healing alone, but also spiritual benefit; Bruce, *Acts*, 151-152.

<sup>137</sup> Being saved from Egyptian captivity (7.25) and from shipwreck (27.20) are not speaking of spiritual salvation from one’s own sins, but of physical rescue. This is a common usage of σωτηρία in the LXX (7.25).

### 6.4.3 *Spiritual Conceptions of Salvation in Luke-Acts*

However, Luke's soteriology is broader than the conventional secular understanding of the first century world. Of the 17 uses of the noun forms *σωτήρ*, *σωτηρία*, *σωτήριον* in Luke-Acts,<sup>138</sup> only Acts 7.25 and 27.34 clearly have no 'spiritual' overtones.<sup>139</sup> Luke never uses the noun form when he relates stories about the physical healing of the sick, or the raising of the dead,<sup>140</sup> but has reserved it to refer to something of a more enduring eternal significance:

For Luke, Christ's death and resurrection are at the very heart of God's saving plan for humankind...Salvation at its very core has to do with God's gracious act of forgiving sins through Jesus which causes the moral, mental, emotional, spiritual, and sometimes even physical transformation of an individual...Salvation is something which can happen in the present, and involves the character transformation of a human being...Certainly 'salvation' for Luke has social consequences, but equally clearly it is a spiritual transformation of human personality that leads a person to see the logical social consequences of receiving Jesus.<sup>141</sup>

This can be seen in the story of Zacchaeus (Lk 19.1-10). There is no mention of Jesus healing Zacchaeus physically, or exorcising a demon, or delivering him from foes or from danger. Instead, Jesus says that 'today salvation (*σωτηρία*) has come to this house' (19.9), and 'what is meant is the recovery of a spiritually lost person by means of Jesus' gracious behavior towards the man'.<sup>142</sup> The evidence of Zacchaeus' conversion and transformed character is his desire to give generously to the poor and return fourfold to all from whom he has stolen (19.8). This theme of the internal, spiritual transformation of the human being, which has implications in every area of their lives, continues throughout Acts.<sup>143</sup>

### 6.4.4 *The Means of Salvation in Acts*

Luke directly states the means of salvation: 'We are saved (*σωθῆναι*) through the grace (*χάριτος*) of the Lord Jesus' (Acts 15.11); salvation is available because Christ is gracious.<sup>144</sup>

Jesus is also the only source of salvation in Acts: 'There is salvation in no one else (*οὐκ ἔστιν*

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<sup>138</sup> *Σωτήρ*: Lk 1.47; 2.11; Acts 5.31; 13.23. *Σωτηρία*: Lk 1.69,71,77; 19.9; Acts 4.12; 7.25; 13.26,47; 16.17; 27.34. *Σωτήριον*: Lk 2.30; 3.6; Acts 28.28. Hence there are eight total in Lk, and nine total in Acts.

<sup>139</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 831. Possibly also Lk 1.47,71.

<sup>140</sup> He uses the verbal form, *σώζω*, but never the noun forms, *σωτήρ*, *σωτηρία*, *σωτήριον*.

<sup>141</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 837-38.

<sup>142</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 838.

<sup>143</sup> E.g., Acts 4.12; 13.26,47; 16.17; 28.28.

<sup>144</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 837.



ἐν ἄλλῳ οὐδενὶ ἢ σωτηρίᾳ); for there is no other name (οὐδὲ γὰρ ὄνομά ἐστιν ἕτερον) under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved' (δεῖ σωθῆναι ἡμᾶς, Acts 4.12). Though Luke believes in a universal gospel for all peoples, there is no concept of religious relativism here, but a conviction that all must be saved (δεῖ), and there is no other name to appeal to than the name of Jesus.<sup>145</sup> Luke is no 'universalist', and does not believe that every person will be saved, but he insists that God offers salvation to every person.

For Luke, salvation is something that comes from and belongs to God.<sup>146</sup> It is something humans can receive, not achieve. The only required human response is faith.<sup>147</sup> The forgiveness of sins is the primary meaning of salvation for Luke.<sup>148</sup> It is this gracious act of forgiving sins through the death and resurrection of Jesus which causes the holistic transformation of the individual who believes. Acts 13.38-39 summarizes these concepts: 'I want you to know that *through Jesus the forgiveness of sins* (ἄφεσις ἁμαρτιῶν) *is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is justified* (πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων δικαιούται).'

#### 6.4.5 Holistic Salvation in Luke-Acts

Luke evidently understands the connection between salvation and health and protection, so prevalent in his culture, and he relates his discussion to such 'natural' understandings. But his soteriology is different than this. At the heart of Luke's concept of salvation is the reality that God has done something new through Christ's life, death, and resurrection, which has made possible a sort of salvation not previously available. This decisive historical event is

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<sup>145</sup> As in other places, salvation has spiritual, physical, and social dimensions, as the presence of the healed man in this Sanhedrin session demonstrates. See Johnson, *Acts*, 78.

<sup>146</sup> This is a 'book-end' to Luke-Acts: Lk 2.30: Simeon's eyes have seen 'your salvation' (τὸ σωτήριόν σου); Acts 28.28: Paul says that 'the salvation of God' (τὸ σωτήριον τοῦ Θεοῦ) has been sent to the Gentiles.

<sup>147</sup> The phrase 'your faith has saved/healed you' (ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε) is a common one in the Gospel (e.g. Lk 7.50; 8.48; 17.19; 18.42; see also 5.20). Cf. Acts 16.30-31; when the jailer asks 'what must I do to be saved?', Paul and Silas reply, 'Believe (πίστευσον) in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your whole household.' While God initiates the offer of salvation, a person must respond in faith to receive it.

<sup>148</sup> Foerster & Fohrer, 'σῶζω', 997: 'again and again in Acts the content of σωτηρία is the forgiveness of sins, 3.19,26; 5.31; 10.43; 13.38; 22.16; 26.18.'

the beginning of the eschatological age, in which the dominion of God breaks into human history, fueled by the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost.<sup>149</sup>

As this salvation touches lives, its effects are initially spiritual and theological, yet the transformation works itself out in every external and internal aspect of the person's life.

'Luke's salvation at its very core has to do with God's gracious act of forgiving sins through Jesus which causes the moral, mental, emotional, spiritual, and sometimes even physical transformation of an individual.'<sup>150</sup> It is a universal salvation, holistic, and all-encompassing salvation, because it has implications for every aspect and need of an individual's life.

The universal nature of salvation in Acts increases the value of the offer being made by a Christian missionary. If rational choice theory is true, and people largely make religious choices on the basis of the greatest potential personal gain, then Christian conversion was very attractive, for it offered benefit for every aspect of a person's life.<sup>151</sup> This understanding would have stimulated Christian mission greatly, for missionaries gained confidence and motivation from the increasing awareness of the comprehensive value of the salvation that they offered to people through the gospel. By claiming that Christian σωτηρία could meet

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<sup>149</sup> This is the fulfillment of the prophetic promises of God (cf. Isa 25.9; 26.18; 45.17; 61.1). 'Luke focuses on the inbreaking of divine salvific activity into human history with the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth among [hu]mankind. Jesus did not come as the end of history...He is rather seen as the end of one historical period and the beginning of another, and all of this is a manifestation of a plan of God to bring about the salvation of human beings who recognize and accept the plan', J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1981): 179.

<sup>150</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 837. I would also add social transformation to this list. The social dimension can be seen in Luke's concern for the poor and the release of the captives, which includes release from demonic possession. Also, in the parable of the prodigal son salvation expresses itself in family reconciliation (Lk 15).

<sup>151</sup> Rational choice theory claims that people search for the 'best religious buy', which provides them with the greatest gain for the smallest price. Stark argues for its application to early Christianity throughout *Rise of Christianity*, esp. 163-89. Some scholars have critiqued this approach, on the basis that religion in the ancient world is more 'embedded' and less of a 'choice' than in the modern world, making it anachronistic to take contemporary social scientific models and apply them to antiquity, B. Malina, 'The Rise of Christianity', *CBQ* 59 (1997): 593-5; B. L. Mack, 'Many Movements, Many Myths: Redescribing the Attraction of Early Christianities', *RSR* 25 (1999): 132-6. Others query how 'rational' people actually are when making religious choices. See L. A. Young, ed. *Rational Choice Theory and Religion* (New York: Routledge, 1997); R. Collins, 'Applying Contemporary Religious Sociology to Early Christianity', *RSR* 25 (1999): 136-9.

every need, and address every concern in a person's life,<sup>152</sup> Luke gives it a strategic advantage in the competitive religious market-place of the first century world.<sup>153</sup>

### **6.5 Conclusion – An All-Encompassing Theology of Universal Relevance**

This chapter has shown that the εὐαγγέλιον in Acts is for all places, all ethnicities and peoples, all parts of the social spectrum, and every aspect of a person's life. This is in effect an all-consuming universal vision, totally void of limiting factors. There is no person for whom the gospel is not applicable and relevant, and there is no part of the person to whom it does not apply its transforming power. For Luke, the gospel is for all of everyone.<sup>154</sup> As

Witherington says, 'The whole gospel must be proclaimed to the whole person in the whole world, for there is one, all-sufficient Savior for all, and therefore all must be for this one.'<sup>155</sup>

#### **6.5.1 Universal Relevance Requires Universal Proclamation**

Luke meant for this universal theological worldview to be a potent stimulus for mission in the early church. Early Christians were empowered and motivated by the idea that the message which they carried (the λόγος), advanced by the powerful Spirit (the πνεῦμα), was relevant to all people,<sup>156</sup> and that it possessed the power to transform the entire person, through the offer of holistic salvation (σωτηρία). If God offers this to every person, a messenger is required, to take this good news to every person. Universal theology demands universal proclamation.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Whether this was true or not is another question; this is how Luke presents salvation in Luke-Acts, and that in itself would have had a positive effect on mission.

<sup>153</sup> How religion functioned in antiquity remains an open question. In my MA dissertation, 'The Social Setting of Early Christian Expansion: A Dialogue with Rodney Stark' (Sheffield University Press, 2006), I argued that religion in urban centres was less embedded than in rural areas, which would help explain why Stark uses a marketplace model (and focuses on urban Pauline Christianity), while Malina uses Mediterranean agrarian models, more applicable to rural Christianity in Galilee (and less relevant to this study). This highlights the difficulty with applying the social sciences to ancient history: minimal concrete evidence limits our ability to treat ancient cultures in a scientifically appropriate way (i.e., interviews, surveys, first-hand observation, and other tools of a modern sociologist). Different models and theories are helpful, but never foolproof.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. 1 Tim 2.4: 'God desires *all people to be saved* and to come to the knowledge of the truth.'

<sup>155</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 72.

<sup>156</sup> The reader of Acts would realize that this means that every person they meet is a candidate for evangelism.

<sup>157</sup> The universal relevance of the gospel to all people does not necessitate universal acceptance of the message; Luke maintains that the message is for all people, but this does not mean they will all necessarily be saved. A theology of universal relevance is not full universalism (or universal reconciliation). Throughout Acts, many different people receive the word by believing, and are saved, while others clearly reject it.

This is a similar approach to that of Paul in Rom 10.12-15. Paul begins by claiming the universal relevance of the Gospel to all people, 'Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all' (10.12). He then says that though the message is applicable to everyone, people cannot actually call on the name of the Lord and be saved unless a preacher or missionary is sent to them and preaches the message of salvation to them (10.14). The cumulative effect of Luke's universal theology is virtually identical to Paul's conclusion: a missionary must be sent to proclaim the εὐαγγέλιον to all people, that they might hear it, have the opportunity to believe it, and be saved. The only logical conclusion to universal theology is mission.

Luke is seeking to inspire and motivate his readers to involve themselves in the evangelistic mission of the Jesus movement. He is attempting to generate the next wave of missionaries, 'sent' as 'preachers', to 'bring good news of good things' (Rom 10.14-15). By claiming that the message is relevant to every person, and applies to every part of life, Luke is demanding a response: active missional engagement. The only reply to Luke's universal theology is universal mission, on a personal level, in every relationship in an individual's social networks, and on a church-wide level, in every place throughout a community, and throughout the earth. This would motivate and empower the ancient reader of Acts towards purposeful evangelism. Luke's universalized theology permeates the Acts narrative, and serves as a potent stimulus for the missionary efforts of the early church. It also requires a total response of faith and discipleship in return, as will be seen in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 7 – ‘RADICAL CHRISTIANITY’

In Acts the all-encompassing message of the gospel requires everything of both its hearer, and its bearer. The holistic salvation it offers, which transforms every aspect of life, produces faithful devotion in its recipients, and requests a total discipleship response in return. This wholehearted response is at the heart of Luke’s understanding of radical Christianity, and he uses characterization throughout Acts to model this sort of radical lifestyle, and challenge his readers to emulate it in their personal lives.<sup>1</sup>

### 7.1 *The Intensification of Demands in Luke-Acts*

One of the characteristic themes of Luke-Acts is the intensification of discipleship demands.<sup>2</sup>

#### 7.1.1 *The Articulation of Jesus’ Radical Discipleship Requirements in Luke*

Jesus’ demands on those who receive God’s free gift of salvation in Luke are strenuous and intensified from parallel passages: ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross *daily* (καθ’ ἡμέραν) and follow me<sup>3</sup>...*No one* (οὐδεὶς) who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the Kingdom of God<sup>4</sup>...If anyone comes to me and does not *hate* (μισεῖ) his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, *even his own life* – he cannot be my disciple<sup>5</sup>...Any of you who does not give up *all* of his possessions (πᾶσι τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ ὑπάρχουσιν) cannot be my disciple<sup>6</sup> (Lk 9.23,62; 14.26,33).

None of these radical demands have an *exact* parallel in the other Gospels, and they all express Luke’s unique understanding of strenuous Christian discipleship. The Lukan

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Radical’ is understood here as extreme, far-reaching, uncompromising, drastic, activist, fanatical, non-conformist, revolutionary, and even militant. It is the opposite of conservative, traditional, conventional, or conformist. Cf. C. Rowland, *Radical Christianity* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998), who focuses on early Christianity, in its prophetic power and protest, as a model for contemporary radical discipleship, social justice, liberation theology, revolutionary change, and cultural transformation.

<sup>2</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 71.

<sup>3</sup> In the synoptic parallel passages (Mt 16.24; Mk 8.34), ‘daily’ does not exist. The Lukan form is more radical.

<sup>4</sup> There is no parallel to this saying in the other Gospels, though cf. Jn 6.66.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Mt 10.36-37: ‘A man’s enemies (ἐχθροί) will be the members of his household. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is no worthy of Me.’ This is a parallel saying, but not as extreme as ‘hate’; the Lukan form is the harder version of the saying.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. the story of the rich young ruler, ‘Sell *everything you have* (πάντα ἅσα ἔχεις) and give to the poor’ (Lk 18.22; par., Mt 19.21; Mk 10.21), and Peter’s response: ‘We have left *all we had* to follow you!’ (Lk 18.28).

parables of building a tower, and of going to war against another king (Lk 14.28-32) show that one should never take following Jesus lightly, or underestimate the cost it will require.<sup>7</sup> For Luke, complete surrender is the only way to follow Jesus: *daily* self-denial and sacrifice, *never* looking back, renouncing *all others* and even one's own life, and giving up *everything* are simply what it means to follow Jesus and respond to such a great salvation.

### *7.1.2 The Attainment of Jesus' Radical Discipleship Requirements in Acts*

These radical discipleship demands, which Luke intentionally intensifies, are found in his Gospel and echoed throughout the Acts narrative. Jesus' disciples rarely fulfill these intense demands in the Gospel. In Luke's Gospel Jesus sets the standard, through his teaching and his personal life example, and in Acts that standard is attained to by his followers.<sup>8</sup>

It is the death and resurrection of Jesus, coupled with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, which empowers the disciples to successfully live these strenuous discipleship standards which Jesus has set forth. Luke is teaching his readers something here. Jesus' discipleship standards are intentionally impossible to fulfill, and the disciples fail multiple times in Luke's Gospel, particularly as the end of Jesus' ministry draws near.<sup>9</sup> They do not understand what is happening, they are characterized by fear rather than boldness, by desertion and denial rather than loyal devotion, and they are more interested in self-preservation than in self-denial.<sup>10</sup> In all of this they are 'normal' and relatable to Luke's readers. Luke is teaching that apart from God's supernatural empowerment, people can never live as God intends. The death and resurrection of Jesus provide this power, and a new era of salvation history begins – everything changes with the cross, and the subsequent sending of the Spirit on the post-Easter community.

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<sup>7</sup> For Luke, you must 'count the cost' (14.28,31) first, and the cost is high – everything.

<sup>8</sup> Jesus did not merely teach about this radical way of living – he modeled it through his own lifestyle, and particularly through the cross. This must have been another source of strength and inspiration to his disciples.

<sup>9</sup> Luke's readers would have surely identified with these failures and frustrations, and also with the seeming impossibility of what God was asking of them.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. e.g., Lk 9.33,40-41,46,54-55; 10.20; 18.31; 22.34,41,45-46,50-51,57-62; 23.26-56. These are direct failings of the discipleship standards which Jesus had earlier articulated (above).

After Pentecost the disciples are transformed. Peter, who had only recently failed by deserting Jesus and denying that he knew him three times (Lk 22.56-62), now boldly and selflessly proclaims the arrival of the kingdom of God (Acts 2.14-40), and in dramatic fashion three thousand people are added to their numbers that very day (2.41). This leads to the first summary passage (2.42-47), in which the early believers sell their possessions and goods and give to anyone who has need (2.45).<sup>11</sup> In the next summary, Luke claims that there are no needy persons among them, so great is their sacrificial sharing with one another (4.32,34-35).<sup>12</sup> These are all direct fulfillments of Jesus' radical demands (Lk 14.33), and divine proof that the church is composed of the legitimate followers of Jesus, for they are fulfilling his discipleship requirements, by the Spirit's power.

In addition to selfless generosity, the early church is characterized by boldness and fearlessness; nothing will deter them.<sup>13</sup> After being flogged and ordered not to speak about Jesus, they leave the Council, '*rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for the Name. And every day (πᾶσάν τε ἡμέραν)...they never stopped teaching and proclaiming (οὐκ ἐπαύοντο διδάσκοντες καὶ εὐαγγελιζόμενοι) Jesus the Christ' (5.41-42).*<sup>14</sup>

This theme of boldness, even to the point of personal sacrifice and suffering, continues through the Acts narrative, and climaxes with the martyrdom of Stephen (7.54-60). Stephen is serene (7.55-56), and seems to gladly give up his life for Christ's sake.<sup>15</sup> This event sparks widespread persecution (8.1-3), yet 'those who had been scattered preached the

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<sup>11</sup> This is a direct fulfillment of Jesus' demand that his followers would give up all to follow him (Lk 14.33), and that they would sell their possessions and goods and give to the poor (Lk 18.22,28).

<sup>12</sup> How exactly this system of sharing worked is another matter. For Luke, these sorts of things are fulfillments of Jesus' arduous discipleship demands. He holds up Barnabas as a good example of this sort of living (4.36-37), and Ananias and Sapphira as a poor example (5.1-11).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Acts 4.13,19-20,29-31; 5.29-32,41-42; many other examples in Acts.

<sup>14</sup> The ancient values of shame and honour are reversed, and flogging becomes an honour, because it is a result of their bold witness for Jesus. Their ministry is neither hindered nor inhibited by these threats.

<sup>15</sup> It was a common conviction in the ancient world that martyrdom legitimates one's witness. For the early church, martyrdom was not something to be sought, nor was it something to be avoided, as it was an honour to suffer on behalf of Christ. Like Jesus, Stephen offers nonviolent resistance and a bold prophetic witness against the corrupt temple hierarchy. See C. H. Talbert, 'Martyrdom and the Lukan Social Ethic', *Political Issues in Luke-Acts*, R.J. Cassidy, P. J. Scharper, eds. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983): 99-110.

word *everywhere they went*' (8.4). Physical threats and death itself do not deter the believers in Acts. Self-preservation is replaced by obedience as the highest value. Saul the persecutor (8.1; 9.1-2) encounters the risen Christ and receives a call to go to the Gentiles (9.15-16). The remainder of Acts contains travel stories of Paul advancing God's kingdom, filled with the Spirit, continually risking his life, that all would hear the gospel.

This sort of bold evangelism in Acts is the ultimate example of selflessness, and the best way to 'deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow me' (Lk 9.23). When a person understands that the direct result of this is likely to be persecution, suffering, and even martyrdom, this is the essence of 'hating your own life' (Lk 14.26). Additionally, many of the missionaries in Acts literally leave their homes and families behind without looking back; thus they 'hate' their families in comparison to their devotion to Christ (Lk 9.62; 14.26).

### *7.1.3 God Enables His People to Live His Way*

For Luke, this kind of extreme discipleship, characterized by radical devotion to God, is the fulfillment of the discipleship demands Jesus articulated and modeled in his Gospel. The contrast between the pre- and post-Easter disciples is an intentional literary device. Filled with the Spirit, the disciples do not fear suffering or death.<sup>16</sup> They do not count their possessions as their own, but give to those in need. They leave behind the comforts of home and family to spread the gospel. They are swept up in the irresistible advance of the Word, and surrendered to the leadership of the Holy Spirit, even when this brings personal sacrifice.

Luke is using characterization here; this high standard of sacrificial, fearless, and uncompromising devotion to God is meant to inspire and motivate his readers to follow the example of these earliest Christians. His message is that this way of living is impossible, apart from God's empowerment. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus and the sending of the Spirit, God has provided a way for normal people to fulfill Jesus' discipleship

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<sup>16</sup> They still need a bit of reassurance and help from time to time: Acts 7.55-56; 18.9-10; 22.17,18; 23.11; 27.23-24. Notice that it is nearly always Jesus himself who brings this.



standards. It is now possible – God’s people can live in the faithful and sacrificial way that he desires, as they receive the Spirit’s empowerment to enter into his missional purposes.

## 7.2 *The Apostolic Ethos*

According to Luke, an ethos emerges in the early church, particularly among its leaders and missionaries.<sup>17</sup> This ethos is made up of certain shared traits, which capture the fundamental and distinctive character of the early Christians, and is expressed through their attitudes, habits, actions, and beliefs. It becomes the ideal environment in which Christian mission can flourish. This defining culture can be called the apostolic ethos.<sup>18</sup>

### 7.2.1 *Willingness to Suffer*

The willingness to suffer and even die on behalf of Jesus and the advancement of the gospel is the heart of the apostolic ethos which pervades the book of Acts.<sup>19</sup> The rationale for this is simple: if Jesus suffered, his followers will also suffer.<sup>20</sup> Christ’s suffering is a prominent theme in Acts, particularly in the evangelistic speeches (3.18; 17.13; 26.23).<sup>21</sup> The early Christians considered it an honour to follow in his footsteps, and suffer for his name (5.41).<sup>22</sup>

This can be seen in Jesus’ calling of Saul: ‘This man is my chosen instrument...*I will show him how much he must suffer for my name*’ (ὅσα δεῖ αὐτὸν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματός μου παθεῖν, Acts 9.15-16). For the Christians, and especially their leaders, following Jesus inevitably involves suffering; the two are intertwined. The bearers of the Word suffer failure, humiliation, threats, shipwrecks, beatings, stonings, imprisonment, and martyrdom with

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<sup>17</sup> Because Acts is narrative, Luke never spells this ethos out in a systematic way (in much the same way he treats the person and activity of the Spirit), but he tells story after story which illustrate it.

<sup>18</sup> The ‘apostolic ethos’ of the early church does not refer to the apostolic office (an apostle, Eph 4.11), but to the more general meaning of the word ἀπόστολος: a sent out one, messenger, delegate, or missionary.

<sup>19</sup> Christian suffering is a prominent theme throughout the NT. Cf. Rom 8.17; 2 Cor 1.16; 7.9; Gal 3.4; Phil 1.29; 1 Thes 3.4; 2 Tim 1.12; 2.3,9; 1 Pet 3.14-17; 4.19; Rev 2.10.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. ch. 4, the suffering of the messengers of the Word in Acts, and Luke’s theology of providential suffering.

<sup>21</sup> This has its roots in the prophetic servant songs: Isa 42.1-7; 49.1-6; 50.4-9; 52.13-53.12.

<sup>22</sup> Paul explains this dynamic: ‘if we are children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him’ (Rom 8.17). Cf. 2 Cor 1.5-6; Phil 1.29; 2 Tim 2.8-12; 2 Tim 1.8; Jas 5.10; 1 Pet 5.9.

surprising frequency.<sup>23</sup> There is some reference, and often multiple references, to the theme of opposition and suffering in every chapter in Acts except for three.<sup>24</sup>

The all-pervasive reality of suffering is underscored by Paul and Barnabas' sobering teaching to the newly established churches in Galatia: 'We must go through many hardships (πολλῶν θλίψεων) to enter the kingdom of God' (14.22).<sup>25</sup> Following Jesus is indeed costly, just as he had warned (cf. Lk 9.22-26). Yet the messengers continue on, undeterred by threat or suffering. The ability to endure resistance, to persevere through pain, and to advance the gospel no matter the cost, become a sub-culture within early Christianity, which enables the church to flourish and grow, even in the midst of opposition and persecution.

This is illustrated in Paul's life before he arrives at Jerusalem for the last time.<sup>26</sup> The Caesarean believers use prophetic ministry to urge him not to go (Acts 21.10-12). But Paul's response is stunning: 'Why are you weeping and breaking my heart (κλαίοντες καὶ συνθρύπτοντές μου τὴν καρδίαν)? I am ready not only *to be bound* (δεθῆναι), but also *to die* (ἀποθανεῖν) in Jerusalem *for the name of the Lord Jesus*' (21.13). This scene reveals a vulnerable side of Paul. He is not devoid of emotion, but uses expressive language, speaking of their words 'crushing' his heart to pieces, so as to deprive him of courage. Yet he remains

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. 2 Cor 11.23-28 for Paul's own recounting of his sufferings, which essentially validate his claims to apostleship: hard work, frequent imprisonment, severe flogging, being often exposed to death, five of the forty lashes minus one, three times beaten with rods, stoned once, three times shipwrecked, a night and day in the open sea, constantly being on the move, in danger from rivers, bandits, Jews, Gentiles, and false-Christians; in danger in the city, country, and at sea; going without sleep; being hungry and thirsty and going without food often; being cold and naked; and facing daily the pressure of his concern for the churches.

<sup>24</sup> E.g., 2.13; 4.1-7,21; 5.17-18,33,40; 6.8-14; 7.54-60; 8.1-4; 9.1-2,16,23-25; 11.1-3; 12.1-5; 13.8,50; 14.4-5,19,22; 15.2,5,39; 16.22-24; 17.5-7,13,32; 18.12-13; 19.23-40; 20.3,22-24; 21.11,27-36; 22.22-24; 23.12-14,30; 24.5-9; 25.6-7; 26.9-11; 27.13-42; 28.4,16. The exceptions are chs. 1, 3, and 10.

<sup>25</sup> Θλίψις refers to difficulties or sufferings, in this case coming from persecution for loyalty to one's faith. It was not simply the apostles and leaders who were experiencing this, but the average Christ-followers as well.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Paul's sobering description of apostolic ministry in 1 Cor 4.9-13: 'God has exhibited us as *apostles* last of all, as *men condemned to death*; because we have become a *spectacle to the world*...we are *fools* for Christ's sake...we are *weak*...we are *without honor*...we are *both hungry and thirsty*, and are *poorly clothed*, and are *roughly treated*, and are *homeless*; and we *toil, working with our own hands*; when we are *reviled*, we *bless*; when we are *persecuted*, we *endure*; when we are *slandered*, we *try to conciliate*; we have become as *the scum of the world, the dregs of all things*...' Cf. 2 Cor 6.4-10: 'in *much endurance*, in *afflictions*, in *hardships*, in *distresses*, in *beatings*, in *imprisonments*, in *tumults*, in *labors*, in *sleeplessness*, in *hunger*...by *glory and dishonor*, by *evil report* and *good report*; regarded as *deceivers*...as *dying* yet *behold, we live*; as *punished* yet not put to death, as *sorrowful* yet always *rejoicing*, as *poor* yet *making many rich*, as *having nothing* yet possessing all things.'

resolute; he is prepared not simply to suffer through imprisonment and torture for Christ, but also to give his life for Jesus' name. This is the essence of the apostolic ethos.

### 7.2.2 A Pioneering Spirit

There is a second aspect to the apostolic ethos in Acts, a pioneering spirit, determined to take the gospel to new frontiers and to expand its boundaries to include people who have never heard. It is set in place by Jesus' mandate to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1.8). The earliest church seems to struggle to grasp this concept, waiting in Jerusalem. But the persecution triggered by Stephen's martyrdom initiates an unintentional process of missional expansion (8.1-4), and the Cornelius episode concretizes God's desire that the good news would go to all places and people in the minds of the church leaders (Acts 10, 11, 15).

The church at Antioch-on-the-Orontes grasps this concept most clearly: 'While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So...they placed their hands on them and sent them off' (*αὐτοῖς ἀπέλυσαν*, Acts 13.2-3).<sup>27</sup> This episode is a watershed moment in the life and mission of the early church; they are beginning to understand that God really wants them to take the good news beyond their locale, to all peoples everywhere.<sup>28</sup> After this commissioning, Paul and his associates go on to expand the boundaries of Christianity, often engaged in frontier outreach where the gospel has never been preached before (Acts 13-21).

In the last version of Paul's conversion story (Acts 26), Jesus refers to this pioneering calling on Paul's life: 'I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am *sending (ἀποστέλλω) you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place*

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<sup>27</sup> Notice that it is the Holy Spirit who initiates this movement outward, sending Barnabas and Paul out (13.4).

<sup>28</sup> The universal theology discussed in the previous chapter links with this – the fact that the good news is for all people, in every location, motivates the early missionaries in their efforts to spread the Word in new places.

among those who are sanctified by faith in me' (26.17-18).<sup>29</sup> Paul carries this apostolic mandate in Acts, broadening the influence of early Christianity in the Empire as he embodies the pioneering spirit of the apostolic ethos.

Paul articulates this pioneering spirit vividly in his letter to the Romans.<sup>30</sup> He desires to go where nobody has gone, to open up new frontiers for the faith, and to continually expand the borders of the kingdom. He sees himself as a builder, who must establish the entire structure, from the foundation up, and not build on any already existing foundation.<sup>31</sup> This need for new frontiers and hunger for expansion are the essence of the pioneering spirit, and an essential part of the apostolic ethos of the early church in Acts.<sup>32</sup>

### 7.2.3 Supernatural Power – Signs and Wonders

To say that mission is intertwined with miracles in Acts is stating the obvious. There are at least eight distinguishable types of miracles in Acts, each with multiple occurrences.<sup>33</sup> These miraculous events form clear repeated patterns; Luke means for his readers to understand that this is how God works, and it is a crucial part of the unfolding mission.

#### **Table 7.1 Miracles in Acts**

- 1) *Physical healing* (12 at least) – 3.1-10; 4.14; 5.15-16; 8.7; 9.8,18,33-35; 13.11-12; 14.8-10,20; 19.12; 28.8,9
- 2) *Miraculous knowledge* (five) – 2.6-11; 5.3-4,9; 27.10,31,34
- 3) *Raising from the dead* (two) – 9.36-42; 20.8-12
- 4) *Casting out unclean spirits* (four) – 5.16; 8.7; 16.16-18; 19.12
- 5) *Miraculous release from prison* (three) – 5.19-21; 12.7-10; 16.25-26
- 6) *Miraculous protection* (two) – 14.19-20 (?); 28.3-6
- 7) *Angelic intervention* (seven) – 5.19; 8.26; 10.3-11.13; 12.7-11,15,23; 27.23
- 8) *Miraculous speech* (three) – 2.4; 10.46; 19.6

This represents a total of 38 supernatural events, an average of more than one per chapter.

These do not include miracles such as the establishment of the church in new locations, the

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<sup>29</sup> This passage is another indication that Luke knows the essential Pauline message (cf. 1 Cor 6.11; Eph 5.26).

<sup>30</sup> Rom 15.19-21: 'From Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation; but as it is written, "They who had no news of him shall see, and they who have not heard shall understand."' This passage from Isa 52.15 is a fundamental motivator for Paul.

<sup>31</sup> He echoes this sentiment to the Corinthian church: 'Our hope is that, as your faith grows, our area of activity among you will greatly expand, so that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you. For we do not want to boast about work already done in another man's territory' (2 Cor 10.15-16).

<sup>32</sup> As our examples show, Paul's description of this pioneering spirit corresponds with Luke's account in Acts.

<sup>33</sup> See Witherington, *Acts*, 220; Hemer, *Acts*, 435-6.

miraculous guidance of missionaries, or the salvation of individuals, which Luke would certainly see as supernatural events in their own right. In fact, Luke probably understands the entire Acts narrative to be one large supernatural event:

Miracles are...in Luke's understanding of the matter, part and parcel of the entire mission of witness. The whole is miraculous, in so far as it is a continuous mighty work of God. By the divine power the gospel is preached, converts are made, the Church is established in unity and brotherhood, the opposing powers, whether human or demonic are conquered...The whole mission...[is] effected by supernatural power, whether in the guidance given to the missionaries, in their dramatic release from prison or deliverance from enemies or shipwreck, or in the signs of healing and raising from the dead...It is consequently difficult to pick out the miraculous from the non-miraculous in Luke's story.<sup>34</sup>

For Luke, one of the hallmarks of the apostolic ethos is this supernatural power in operation; signs and wonders happen when the church is functioning apostolically, as it was made to.<sup>35</sup>

Supernatural events are normal Christianity for Luke, typical attributes of the apostolic ethos of the Christian community, and they take place in the context of one sweeping miracle, the Christian movement. But the miraculous stories he recounts are also a crucial piece of Luke's evidence for living in the eschatological age of the outpouring of the Spirit, when the prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures are coming to pass. The age of fulfillment has dawned, and signs and wonders are a primary confirmation of this reality.<sup>36</sup>

#### 7.2.4 Evangelistic Commitment

In Acts, the apostolic ethos of the church is most fundamentally characterized by a commitment to evangelism. The church's chief goal is that people would hear the universally good news of the gospel, and have the chance to respond to it for themselves. There is an

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<sup>34</sup> Lampe, 'Miracles,' 171.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. 2 Cor 12.12: 'The signs of an apostle (σημεία τοῦ ἀποστόλου) were performed among you with all perseverance (ἐν πάσῃ ὑπομονῇ), by signs (σημεῖοις) and wonders (τέρασι) and miracles (δυνάμεισι).'

<sup>36</sup> On remaining 'open' to the possibility of miracles when reading the text of Luke-Acts, cf. I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978): 28-32; Hemer, *Acts*, 17; Bruce, *Acts*, 31. Luke is writing from within his own worldview, and this is a worldview with an abundance of room for the supernatural. 'These stories will no doubt continue to create problems for some moderns who rule out in advance the supernatural...and dismiss all history writing that includes such tales as pre-critical and naive in character. I would suggest that such an apriori approach to miracles is equally uncritical and naive, not least because science has hardly begun to plumb the depths of what is and is not possible in our universe, and especially because we are regularly being warned by scientists (particularly physicists) that assumptions about natural laws and a closed mechanistic universe and the like do not cover all the known data. One must also take into account that in every age of human history there have been numerous claims about the miraculous, many of which were made by highly intelligent and rational persons not readily given to superstition. Luke seems to have been one such person', Witherington, *Acts*, 224.

almost constant stream of evangelistic activity in Acts.<sup>37</sup> Luke is arguing by this volume of mission that rather than being a duty to perform, this was the early believers' normal way of life, and their identity was wrapped up in their mission.<sup>38</sup> It was not that being 'un-evangelistic' was wrong, but it was simply unnatural for these first Christians – they were evangelists, not just by calling, but by fundamental self-identification.

Paul summarizes his commitment to evangelism before the Ephesian elders (Acts 20.22-24),<sup>39</sup> a passage which reveals his motivation, and captures many of the other elements of the apostolic ethos as well. This is a typical Pauline saying, with many parallels from within his letters. Notice that he is fully under the leadership and guidance of the Holy Spirit – he is compelled by the Spirit (δεδεμένος τῷ πνεύματι, 20.22). Even when it warns him that suffering awaits him, he will still obey (20.23). Paul is not interested in preserving his own life (cf. Phil 3.7-11). Instead, his preoccupation is with accomplishing the διακονία given him by the Lord Jesus (cf. 2 Cor 5.18).<sup>40</sup> Paul's passion is to complete the mission God has ordained for him, 'to testify to the good news of God's grace' (Acts 20.24),<sup>41</sup> and he will stop at nothing in fulfilling this task. Evangelism is his goal and motivation. Paul knows that no

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<sup>37</sup> We quantified the volume of missional activity in Acts in chapter 3, concluding that it is extremely frequent.

<sup>38</sup> Their *modus operandi* was evangelism, ideally in every relationship, and everywhere they went. This was not simply for the spiritual elite, but for the rank and file as well. Everyone was called to mission. This might take the form of public proclamation, person to person relational mission, or lifestyle and community-based evangelism, but no Christian is exempt from the missional calling in Acts.

<sup>39</sup> 'And now, *compelled by the Spirit*, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that *the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me* in every city, *saying that prison and afflictions await me. But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God*' (διαμαρτύρασθαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς χάριτος τοῦ Θεοῦ). Paul clearly means for his personal life to challenge and inspire these younger church leaders to aspire to the same kind of lifestyle. Luke also intends for this passage to motivate his readers towards a similar response.

<sup>40</sup> The phrase 'finish my course' is an athletic metaphor which Paul is quite fond of (cf. 1 Cor 9.24; Phil 3.14). The closest parallel is found in 2 Tim 4.7: 'I have finished the race'. This, along with many other linguistic parallels, has led many scholars to conclude that Luke wrote the Pastorals. Witherington, *Acts*, 622 maintains that Luke wrote them at the behest of Paul, near the end of Paul's life. Cf. S. G. Wilson, *Luke and the Pastoral Epistles* (London: SPCK, 1979), who argues that the pastorals represent a post-Pauline view. It could also be that the Pastoral Epistles reflect a later Pauline viewpoint about the organization of the church and other issues.

<sup>41</sup> Though this precise formulation is not found in Paul's letters, emphasized by C. K. Barrett, 'Paul's Address to the Ephesian Elders', *God's Christ and His People*, J. Jervell, W. A. Meeks, eds. (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1977): 112, it is an excellent summary of Paul's gospel.

obstacle can deter the advancement of God's people and God's word, for it is a part of God's eternal plan, and therefore guaranteed by the supernatural power of God himself.<sup>42</sup>

### *7.2.5 An Apostolic People*

The early church's willingness to suffer, pioneering spirit, supernatural power, and evangelistic commitment created a powerful combination, and made for radical, fearless, and committed missionaries. This was most true of the leaders and missionaries in Acts. However, a defining culture formed around these character traits, which became the apostolic ethos. All believers in the early church were affected by this.<sup>43</sup> The merger of these characteristics created an ethos of faith, boldness, and power, which infused the early Christian mission with dynamism and purpose. Every Christian was sent by Christ himself – they were all a part of this apostolic ethos. This contributed to their missionary success, and Luke is purposefully attempting to inspire his church to intentionally cultivate the same kind of evangelistic lifestyle, and create the same apostolic ethos.

## *7.3 Disciplined Devotion*

A final aspect of the radical Christianity of the church in Acts is their disciplined enthusiasm for God, which could also be described as personal devotion. Although Luke is not primarily interested in the internal life of the Christian community, he does include episodes which give insight into individuals' personal lives. These reveal a personal connection with God, which manifests itself in various ways, and is another missional stimulus in Acts.

### *7.3.1 Prayer*

Prayer is a frequent theme in Acts. The noun *προσευχή* occurs nine times,<sup>44</sup> while the verb *προσεύχομαι* occurs an additional 16 times.<sup>45</sup> This regular practice of prayer is a crucial part

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<sup>42</sup> This theological framework is at the heart of what drove and empowered the early Christians in Acts. It is interwoven with the unstoppable advance of the Word discussed previously. The early Christians knew this reality, and it gave them tremendous confidence; the advance of God's Kingdom was truly inevitable.

<sup>43</sup> For example, they may not have all experienced miracles regularly, but they were familiar with miracles, and had likely seen them first-hand at some point, or at least certainly known people who had.

<sup>44</sup> 1.14; 2.42; 3.1; 6.4; 10.4,31; 12.5; 16.13,16.

of the church's praxis and kerygma. The earliest group was 'continually devoting themselves with one mind to prayer' (ἦσαν προσκαρτεροῦντες ὁμοθυμαδὸν τῇ προσευχῇ) in Jerusalem, while they waited for the promised Holy Spirit (1.14). During this time, they also prayed (προσευξάμενοι) about who would replace Judas, before choosing Matthias (1.23-26). With these two references, Luke establishes the central role of prayer in the lives of the earliest Christians, even before the paradigm shifting events of Pentecost.<sup>46</sup>

Directly after the coming of the Holy Spirit, the crucial role of prayer is re-emphasized, as the new converts immediately begin to devote themselves to prayer (2.42).<sup>47</sup> The apostles desire to devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word (6.4). Prayer is employed in commissioning a person to a missional task three times, for the seven deacons in Jerusalem (6.6), Paul and Barnabas at Antioch (13.3), and the elders of the churches they establish (14.23). Prayer is also instrumental in people receiving the Holy Spirit (8.15), and being healed: Tabitha is raised from the dead (9.40), and Publius is healed from fever and dysentery (28.8). Prayer is employed in times of crisis and persecution, such as the threats from the Jerusalem authorities (4.24), Peter's imprisonment (12.5,12), and Paul and Silas' imprisonment (16.25), and also at times of sentimental goodbyes, such as with the Ephesian elders (20.36), and the Tyrian disciples (21.5). Prayer is a point of commonality with Jews in Philippi (16.13,16). Christian leaders, such as Peter and John (3.1), Peter (10.9;<sup>48</sup> 11.5), and Paul (9.11; 22.17) make private prayer a habitual practice. In these last four examples, prayer is also linked with the reception of a supernatural vision (9.11-12;10.9-16; 11.5-10; 22.17-18). In Acts, prayer is a primary catalyst for the ongoing expansion of the mission.

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<sup>45</sup> 1.24; 6.6; 8.15; 9.11,40; 10.9,30; 11.5; 12.12; 13.3; 14.23; 16.25; 20.36; 21.5; 22.17; 28.8.

<sup>46</sup> They were following the example and instruction of Jesus. In Luke Jesus prays (Lk 5.16; 6.12; 9.28; 11.1; 22.41), as much as he teaches about prayer (6.28; 11.2; 18.1,10; 22.40). This is one of the unique emphases of Luke's depiction of Jesus (though cf. parallel verses, Mt 14.23; 26.36; Mk 6.46; 14.35; 'prayer' never occurs in Jn.). Luke also shows Jesus modeling this to his disciples (Lk 9.28; 11.1; 22.41). Luke emphasizes the value of prayer to Jesus, and to his followers as well. Prayer was also common within Judaism (Acts 3.1; 16.13,16).

<sup>47</sup> The early believers were *devoted* (προσκαρτεροῦντες) to *prayer*: Luke connects these two concepts 3 times, Acts 1.14; 2.42; 6.4. This is another way of emphasizing prayer's importance to the Christian community.

<sup>48</sup> Peter likely went up on the roof for quietness and privacy, so he could focus on prayer, Bruce, *Acts*, 254.



### 7.3.2 Fasting

In addition to regular prayer, and often in conjunction with it, the early believers have a habit of fasting. The community at Antioch on the Orontes fasts together, as they seek the will of God. They minister to the Lord (λειτουργούντων δὲ αὐτῶν τῷ Κυρίῳ), and fast (νηστεύοντων), when the Holy Spirit instructs them to set apart Barnabas and Saul for the work he has called them to (13.2). So they fast and pray some more (νηστεύσαντες καὶ προσευξάμενοι), and send them away (13.3).<sup>49</sup> Early Christians fast at crucial times, such as when they are appointing elders to help lead new churches: ‘having prayed with fasting (προσευξάμενοι μετὰ νηστειῶν), they commended them to the Lord’ (14.23).<sup>50</sup> Saul also fasts, not eating or drinking anything for three days after his conversion experience (9.9).<sup>51</sup> For Luke fasting is an essential part of the devotion of the early Christians.<sup>52</sup>

### 7.3.3 Worship

In addition to prayer and fasting, the Christian church in Acts is a worshipping community. This is most evident when Paul and Silas are in prison, having been severely beaten, and put in stocks, and are praying (προσευχόμενοι) and singing hymns of praise to God (ὑμνοῦν τὸν Θεόν, 16.25).<sup>53</sup> This extraordinary episode reveals the substance of the early disciples; when they are most under threat, and should be most hopeless and disheartened, they lift their

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<sup>49</sup> Luke repeats that they were fasting twice to emphasize its importance, and to show that this habit is one of the keys to their subsequent missional effectiveness.

<sup>50</sup> Multiple manuscripts, such as p<sup>30</sup> and Bezae, also use νηστεύω at 10.30, to describe Cornelius’ piety.

<sup>51</sup> Whether this is voluntary or involuntary, it fits with a general definition of fasting: abstaining from food for spiritual reasons. This encounter has shaken Paul’s spiritual foundations deeply, and he is in a state of shock. Bruce, *Acts*, 236. Fasting may also be indicated in 10.10; Peter has not eaten and is hungry when he experiences the enigmatic vision of a sheet descending and ascending filled with animals.

<sup>52</sup> This practice is consistent with Jesus’ teaching that when he was taken away, his followers would fast (Lk 5.33-35; cf. Mt 6.16-18), and his example (Mt 4.2).

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Col 3.16: ‘teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God’; see also Eph 5.19. For the singing of hymns in the OT, see 1 Chr 16.9; 2 Chr 23.13; 29.30; Ps 21.22; 70.8; 136.3; Dan 3.24. For similar experiences in prison, Epictetus says, ‘Then we shall be emulating Socrates, when we are able to write paeans in prison’ (*Discourses* 2,6,26-27), and in the *Testament of Joseph*, 8.5, the patriarch ‘sang praise in the house of darkness’, Johnson, *Acts*, 300.

voices to heaven in worshipful song.<sup>54</sup> Acts also mentions Paul going to Jerusalem to worship (προσκυνήσωμεν, 24.11), and the God-fearing Ethiopian eunuch going to Jerusalem to worship (προσκυνήσων, 8.27).<sup>55</sup>

#### *7.3.4 Mission Flows Out of Devotion*

According to Luke, when the early church is in prison, they worship God, when they are persecuted, they pray to God, and when they have crucial decisions to make, they fast and seek God. Their mission is forged in this crucible of God-encounters, and flows out of this disciplined devotion to the God whom they serve. The fervency of their inner devotion produces a dynamic outward expression of mission, and the strength of their outward testimony is directly proportional to the vitality of their inward connection to God, primarily cultivated through spiritual disciplines such as prayer, fasting, and worship.

The church at Antioch is the best example of the direct connection between enthusiastic devotion to God and the expansion of the mission (13.1-3). The link is explicit in the text, for the disciples are worshipping at Antioch, including prayer and fasting (twice), when the Holy Spirit directs them to set apart Paul and Barnabas as missionaries, and their paradigmatic missional journeys begin. In Acts, mission flows directly out of devotion, and it is sustained and strengthened by it as well (cf. Paul and Silas in jail). This fervent personal devotion to God is thus a potent missional catalyst, and Luke wants his readers to grasp this important lesson for the health of their missional efforts.

#### *7.4 Conclusion – ‘Normal’ Christianity*

The main characters of Acts seem larger than life, more like super-heroes than normal men and women. They are fearless, disciplined, selfless, devoted, generous, bold, unflinchingly committed to the cause, and most of all infused with supernatural power, truly ‘radical’ in

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<sup>54</sup> ‘The prison experience is one that tests one’s mettle’, Johnson, *Acts*, 300. It is as if they have resolved that they will worship God, no matter what happens to them. Worship is primary in their lives, and independent of their particular circumstances.

<sup>55</sup> This Jewish habit of temple worship is undoubtedly the root of the early Christians’ practice of worship.

almost every way. But this is intentional – Luke shows their weaknesses and inadequacies as well, and portrays them as normal and relatable people, who have been filled with the Spirit of the Risen Christ.<sup>56</sup> This Spirit is redefining normalcy for the church. What was impossible before is now attainable; radical devotion is the new norm, by the Spirit's empowerment.<sup>57</sup>

Luke uses characterization, semantic repetition, and narrative patterns in Acts to present all of this as a blatant challenge to the church of his day.<sup>58</sup> Are they attaining to Jesus' radical discipleship standards? Are they embodying the apostolic ethos, willing to suffer, walking in miraculous power, evangelizing consistently, and taking the gospel to new frontiers? Are their personal lives characterized by disciplined spiritual devotion to God, with primary habits of prayer, fasting, and worship? In short, are they living in the fullness of the power and possibility that God's Spirit provides? It may seem overwhelming to his readers, but God has made this kind of radical lifestyle accessible.

By tapping into the dynamic power source of the Spirit, the readers of Acts will then be able to live in the intensely missional way that the earliest church lived, and experience the efficacy and fruitfulness that they experienced. Embracing a radical lifestyle of devotion, attaining to the discipleship demands of Jesus, and living out the apostolic ethos of the early church is the call to action that Acts issues to the church. For Luke, anything less than this is missing the mark. Radical Christianity becomes normal Christianity in Acts.

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<sup>56</sup> Luke is intentional to show the weakness of where they have come from. Even Paul, the most heroic of them all, was a confused and deluded persecutor of the church of God before Jesus intervened in his life.

<sup>57</sup> This is particularly true for the discipleship standards, and the disciplined devotion – these are standards and goals for all believers in Luke's mind. The apostolic ethos is a culture that they live in, but should most characterize the apostolic leaders of the church. But the essence of the radical standards that Luke presents in Acts is meant to be a challenge and inspiration to all followers of Christ.

<sup>58</sup> It would be fascinating to look at the reception history of Acts, and see what the dominant reader responses have been. Luke is not merely telling a fascinating 'tale', for the sake of historical interest. His intention is to motivate the church of his day to emulate these radical first Christians, in their own context, by setting a clear example for them to follow. It is likely that many Christians throughout church history have had a similar response when reading Acts – it is an extremely challenging narrative when understood in this way.

## **PART 2 CONCLUSION – ACTS, A CALL TO MISSIONAL ACTION**

Part two has identified some of the missional stimuli which fuel the growth of the early church in Acts. The triumphal spread of the Word is primary, advanced so convincingly by the power of the Spirit. Along with those two themes are the universal theology of the church, and the believers' 'radical' intensification of discipleship demands, apostolic ethos, and enthusiastic devotion. These combined concepts form a catalytic matrix in Acts, the missional stimuli that empower and motivate the early church.

These are not merely 'historical' points of interest for Luke. Acts should be understood as a rhetorical call to action, and a prophetic provocation to the church of Luke's day. Luke's primary purpose in Acts is to provoke his church to missional action, and he does this in the way that he describes the early church, and the activity of God. The Word is still advancing with inexorable authority; Luke urges his readers to join in with it. The Spirit is still empowering with dynamic influence; Luke invites his readers to receive it. The message is still universally relevant and urgent; Luke encourages his church to proclaim it with boldness. And the radical patterns of devotion which the early Christians lived are still attainable; Luke insists that his readers embrace them. In short, Luke is rousing believers from apathy, and inviting them to join in the eschatological mission, inaugurated by Jesus' death and resurrection and the coming of the promised Spirit. Understood in this way, Acts is a clarion call to missional action.

These stimuli are of primary importance for Luke, because they are what spark mission and set it in motion. Before structures and strategies for mission in the church can be discussed, what is fueling and empowering the mission must be clear. Without the 'why' behind it firmly in place, all the best planning and strategizing is doomed to failure. But with these catalysts in place, Luke can propose strategies and approaches to mission which maximize the potential for success. These are the topics of parts three and four.

## PART 3 – MISSIONAL STRUCTURE IN ACTS

*And every day, in the temple and from house to house,  
they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.*

-Acts 5.42 (NASB)

*So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace,  
being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the  
Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.*

-Acts 9.31 (NASB)

The early Christians managed, in a few short centuries, to transform themselves from a regional Jewish sect into the dominant religion of the Roman Empire. Acts is Luke's recounting of how this began to happen, in the first few decades of the Christian church. As he tells the story, he is holding up the earliest church as an example, to be intentionally followed by later generations. In the previous chapters, various stimuli were examined which played a prominent role in motivating and activating the early church's outreach and expansion in Acts. In this part the structures which play a pivotal role in the success of the early Christian mission in Acts will be identified and inspected.

### CHAPTER 8 – THE CHURCH – ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ

The *ἐκκλησία* is one of the most fundamental realities and priorities of the Christian movement in Acts. The church is at the heart of all early Christian mission, and it puts structure and context to virtually every expression of early Christianity.<sup>1</sup> Wherever the early Christians go in Acts, they *never* merely establish converts, or 'make disciples', but they

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<sup>1</sup> In Mt., Jesus uses the term *ἐκκλησία* three times: Mt 16.18: 'I will build my church [*ἐκκλησία*], and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it'; 18.17: 'If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church [*ἐκκλησία*]; and if he refuses to listen even to the church [*ἐκκλησία*], let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.' It is debated whether Jesus actually used the term *ἐκκλησία*, or whether this is Matthean redaction. Luke was not aware of Jesus using this terminology; he would have included it in his Gospel if he was. Whether Jesus used *ἐκκλησία* is not important to this study (he almost certainly taught in Aramaic anyway), because he developed small missional communities, modeled them, and trained his disciples in doing the same, as we shall see in ch. 10. This was something that his followers grasped and would go on to emulate. Jesus put into motion the forces which led to the establishment of what would be called the *ἐκκλησία*, regardless of whether he used the word.

always gather these Christ-followers into small communities, called churches. Establishing the ἐκκλησία is the mission, the goal, and the vision; its importance to the early Christian movement is impossible to overestimate.<sup>2</sup> The local church communities which Luke describes, scattered throughout Palestine and Asia, are the irreplaceable structure which facilitates the advancing mission.

### 8.1 *The Meaning of Ἐκκλησία*

Ἐκκλησία is grammatically related to ἐκκλητος (summoned, selected, often to arbitrate on a point), which has as its verbal form ἐκκαλέω (to summon, to call out).<sup>3</sup> It should be understood as the called out ones, or those who are summoned, and in common ancient usage simply equates to an ‘assembly’ or ‘gathering’.

#### 8.1.1 *Ἐκκλησία in the Greco-Roman World*

This generalized meaning can be broken down into three sub-categories in the first century Greco-Roman world.<sup>4</sup> The most common meaning of ἐκκλησία is a regularly summoned legislative body, or regular statutory assembly.<sup>5</sup> This is the meaning in Acts 19.39,41, which refers to the ἐννόμω ἐκκλησίᾳ, ‘lawful assembly’ in Ephesus. When the craftsmen of Ephesus riot, protesting against the way Paul’s ministry is harming their business, the city clerk invites them to bring their grievances against Paul in this formal ἐννόμω ἐκκλησίᾳ.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ἐκκλησία occurs 115 times in the NT, showing the importance of this concept to early Christian writers.

<sup>3</sup> Though it is probably a compound of ἐκ (out of), and a derivative of καλέω (to call), its meaning is derived from its usage, not its etymology.

<sup>4</sup> *BDAG*, 303-4. Cf. K. L. Schmidt, ‘ἐκκλησία’, *TDNT* 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965): 501-36, which analyzes its usage in Acts, the Pauline Epistles, the rest of the NT, the Greek world, the OT and Judaism, and church history, and also examines the textual and literary criticism of, Hebrew and Aramaic equivalents to, and the etymology of ἐκκλησία.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Josephus, *Ant.*, 12.164: ‘Joseph went up into the temple, and called the multitude together to a congregation, and exhorted them not to be disturbed nor affrighted’; 19.332: ‘This man got together an assembly, while the king was absent at Caesarea’; and many other such usages.

<sup>6</sup> This regular civil meeting would have ordinarily been held three times a month. For the ἐκκλησία in Ephesus cf. Böckh, *Inscriptionum*, 3.325; E. Hicks et al, ed., *Ancient Greek Inscriptions in the British Museum (IBM)* (1874-1916) III/I.481[‘CCCCLXXXI’].340: pp. 123,133: ἐκκλησιαν ἐπανω της σελιδος. On the ἐκκλησία in the theatre in Ephesus see a few lines later, *IBM* III/I.481.395: pp. 124,134: πασαν ἐκκλησιαν εἰς το θεατρον; Dittenberger, *Inscriptiones Selectae*, 480.9.

'Ἐκκλησία can also refer to a casual gathering, which is often a tumultuous and disorderly assembly which erupts spontaneously as people gather together.<sup>7</sup> Luke calls the Ephesian riot an ἐκκλησία (19.32).<sup>8</sup> This informal and spontaneous assembly is directly contrasted with the formal legal assembly to which the protesters are invited in 19.39, yet Luke uses ἐκκλησία to describe both.<sup>9</sup>

A third meaning of ἐκκλησία is a group of people with a shared belief system, otherwise known as a community or congregation.<sup>10</sup> It is often used of the Israelite assembly or congregation in the LXX, as the Greek rendering of the Hebrew קָהָל, *qahal*.<sup>11</sup> Luke uses τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ in this sense (7.38), to refer to the Jews who were assembled in the desert to hear and receive the words of the law.<sup>12</sup>

This third sense of ἐκκλησία is the most familiar Christian usage of the term: the 'church'.<sup>13</sup> Its use became popular among early Christians for at least two reasons.<sup>14</sup> First, it

<sup>7</sup> Cf. 1 Kgdms 19.20 (LXX): 'when they saw a *group* of prophets (τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τῶν προφητῶν) prophesying'; 1 Mac 3.13: 'Judas had gathered many about him, an *assembly* of faithful men ready for war'; Jesus Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 26.5: 'There are three things that my heart fears...the slander of a city, the gathering together of an *unruly multitude*, and a false accusation: all these are worse than death'.

<sup>8</sup> Luke also uses στάσις (19.40) referring to this same riot, meaning a popular uprising, insurrection, or uproar.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. the use of ἐκκλησία by Josephus, e.g., *War*, 1.550: 'now Herod accused the captains and Tero in an *assembly* of the people, and brought the people together in a body against them'; 1.666: 'Salome, told the soldiers, and got them and the rest of the multitude together to an *assembly*, in the amphitheater at Jericho'; 4.159: 'who encouraged them, by going up and down when they were *assembled together* in crowds.' R. P. C. Hanson, *The Acts*, New Clarendon Bible (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), describes Josephus' use, 'to describe a kind of unofficial mass meeting called by some authority to sound public opinion on a certain point and to gain, if possible, a unanimous vote of approval', and argues that this contributed to the Christian use of the word.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. the community of Pythagoras, according to Hermippus, quoted in Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives of the Philos.*, 8.41: 'that he came into the *public assembly* (τὴν ἐκκλησίαν), and said that he had arrived from the shades below...And they, being charmed by what he told them, wept and lamented, and believed that Pythagoras was a divine being; so that they even entrusted their wives to him, as likely to learn some good from him; and that they too were called Pythagoreans.' In Himerius, *Oration*, 39.5, Orpheus even forms for himself τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, 'an *assembly* of wild animals', whom he enchants with his music, and who listen to him in the Thracian mountains.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Josh 8.35; Dt. 31.30; Judg 20.2; 1 Kgdms [1 Sam] 17.47: 'All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves'; 3 Kgdms [1 Kgs] 8.14: 'While the whole *assembly* of Israel was standing there, the king turned around and blessed them.'; PssSol 10.6: 'And the devout shall give thanks in the *assembly* of the people'; TJob 32.8: 'Are you the one who had the censers of the fragrant *assembly*'; Josephus, *Ant.*, 4.309: 'Moses called the people together, with the women and children, to a *congregation*'.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Dt. 4.10; 9.10; 18.16. See also Heb 2.12; Ps 21.23 (LXX): διηγῆσομαι τὸ ὄνομά σου τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς μου, ἐν μέσῳ ἐκκλησίας ὑμνήσω σε.

<sup>13</sup> The word is not a new or technical term for church, but a term borrowed from the surrounding culture. With this in mind, it is best to translate it simply as an assembly or congregation, usually of God's people (except Acts 19). However, 'the church' is the distinctively Christian translation. Witherington, *Acts*, 219.

affirmed continuity with their Israelite roots, for as has been seen, the Septuagint uses it often. Second, by claiming to be a legal assembly, it helped to alleviate suspicions that Christians were an unlawful group, particularly in political circles.

### 8.1.2 Ἐκκλησία in the New Testament and Early Church

While ἔκκλησία in the NT is most often associated with ‘the church’, what this precisely means requires some categorization.<sup>15</sup> First, it can refer to a specific individual Christian group or assembly, which ordinarily would involve worship and the discussion of matters of concern to the community.<sup>16</sup> This meaning of ἔκκλησία occurs frequently in the NT,<sup>17</sup> and often refers to the gathering of Christians in the home of a patron, the house church.<sup>18</sup>

A second use of ἔκκλησία in the NT is in reference to a church or congregation as the totality of Christians living and meeting in a particular locality or geographical area, and not necessarily limited to one specific meeting place. This broader definition of ‘the church’ denotes a connected network of local congregations, or house churches, spread across a city or region. Sometimes in Acts and other parts of the NT this may not have a geographical qualifier.<sup>19</sup> However, it is more common in a geographically specified way, usually in particular cities, such as ‘the church in Jerusalem’ (Acts 2.47; 8.1; 11.22; 15.4,22), in Antioch (Acts 13.1), in Cenchrea (Rom 16.1,23), in Corinth (1 Cor 1.2; 2 Cor 1.1),<sup>20</sup> in Laodicea (Col 4.16; Rev 3.14), in Thessalonica (1 Thes 1.1; 2 Thes 1.1), and in Colossae (Phlm. 1).<sup>21</sup> The

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<sup>14</sup> *BDAG*, 303.

<sup>15</sup> First century individuals only thought of people when they thought of ἔκκλησία. There were no mental images of buildings or steeples or stained glass to cloud the meaning. The groupings of people could meet anywhere – in a home, outdoors, in a coliseum – but the point was the assembled people themselves.

<sup>16</sup> It is in this sense that Jesus says, ‘speak to the gathered assembly’ (εἰπὲ τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ, Mt 18.17). Matthew is using ἔκκλησία in opposition to the Jewish συναγωγή (Mt 12.9; 13.54), to emphasize the Christians’ emerging self-awareness as separate from Judaism. It is likely that Luke’s usage of ἔκκλησία in Acts has a similar goal.

<sup>17</sup> E.g., 1 Cor 11.18; 14.4,12,19,28,34,35; 3 Jn 6; Acts 15.22.

<sup>18</sup> E.g., Rom 16.4,5; 1 Cor 14.33; 16.19; Col 4.15; Phlm. 1.2; 1 Tim 5.16.

<sup>19</sup> Acts 5.11; 8.3; 9.31; 11.26; 12.1,5; 15.3; 18.22; 20.17. This is also the case in 1 Cor 4.17; Phil 4.15; 1 Tim 5.16; Jas 5.14; 3 Jn 9. Cf. also, 1 Clem 44.3: ‘...with the consent of *the whole church*...’; Hermas, *Visions*, 2.4.3: ‘thou shall read [the book] to this city along with the elders that preside over *the church*’.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. 1 Clem 47.6: ‘the very steadfast and ancient church of the Corinthians’.

<sup>21</sup> By other names, cf. Rev 2.1,8,12,18; 3.1,7.



NT also refers to the plural word (ἐκκλησίαι) in certain areas.<sup>22</sup> Finally, ἐκκλησία is used in this sense to refer to the Christian community in a particular geographical region or area, such as the church in Judea (Gal 1.22; 1 Thes 2.14), in Galatia (Gal 1.2; 1 Cor 16.1), in Asia (1 Cor 16.19; Rev 1.4,11,20), or in Macedonia (2 Cor 8.1).

Ἐκκλησία is also thirdly used to designate the global community of Christians.<sup>23</sup> Here the universal church is implied, encompassing all Christ-followers in every location. This worldwide universal meaning in the NT is found almost exclusively in Paul's writings.<sup>24</sup>

### 8.2 The Nature of Ἐκκλησία in Acts

All of the various meanings of ἐκκλησία in the ancient world occur among its 23 occurrences in Acts.<sup>25</sup> Ἐκκλησία is a legal assembly (ἐννόμω ἐκκλησία, 19.39,40), an informal and riotous assembly (19.32), and refers to the Israelites assembled in the desert to receive the law (τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, 7.38).<sup>26</sup> However, Luke's most common usage of ἐκκλησία refers to the early Christian church, a local or regional congregation with a shared belief system.<sup>27</sup> Seventeen of the nineteen total references to ἐκκλησία with this meaning in Acts refer to specific groupings of Christians in a particular geographical city or area: the original church in Jerusalem (eight times: 5.11; 8.1,3; 11.22; 12.1,5; 15.4,22); the church at Antioch (four times: 11.26; 13.1; 14.27; 15.3); at Caesarea (18.22);<sup>28</sup> and at Ephesus (20.17).<sup>29</sup> Acts also

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<sup>22</sup> E.g., Acts 15.41; 16.5; Rom 16.16; 1 Cor 7.17; 2 Cor 8.18-19,23-24; 11.8,28; 12.13; Rev 2.7,11,17,23,29; 3.6,13,22; 22.16.

<sup>23</sup> We can see this triple connotation – local, regional, and universal – particularly in Paul's writings.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 6.4; 12.28; Eph 1.22; 3.10,21; 5.23-25,27,29,32; Col 1.18,24; Phil 3.6. Also possibly Mt.16.18; Acts 9.31. In this universalized sense it is also referred to as: 1) 'the church of God' – ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ, 1 Cor 1.2; 10.32; 11.16,22; 15.9; 2 Cor 1.1; Gal 1.13; 1 Thes 2.14; 2 Thes 1.4; 1 Tim 3.5,15; Acts. 20.28; also Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 1.63.22: 'after being a persecutor of the church of God'; 2) 'the churches of Christ' – ἐκκλησίαι τοῦ Χριστοῦ, Rom 16.16; also Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 5.22.14: 'we preserve both the doctrine of the church of Christ and the grandeur of the divine promise'; and 3) of both God and Christ combined – τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ Θεσσαλονικέων ἐν Θεῷ πατρὶ καὶ Κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ, 1 Thes 1.1.

<sup>25</sup> 5.11; 7.38; 8.1,3; 9.31; 11.22,26; 12.1,5; 13.1; 14.23,27; 15.3,4,22,41; 16.5; 18.22; 19.32,39,40; 20.17,28.

<sup>26</sup> Luke was familiar with the LXX, and its usage of ἐκκλησία. In the OT the Lord acquired a people by performing powerful acts in Egypt; now he had acquired a people by the shedding of Christ's blood (20.28).

<sup>27</sup> Those who assemble together in Christ's name form a community: ἡ ἐκκλησία of a given town or area.

<sup>28</sup> This may refer to the church in Jerusalem, Barrett, *Acts*, 2.880-881.

uses the plural *ἐκκλησίαι* to refer to the groups of Pauline converts in three particular geographical regions: Syria and Cilicia (15.41), Phrygia and Galatia (16.5), and Psidia and Pamphylia (14.23).<sup>30</sup>

### 8.2.1 Luke's Ecclesiology

This leads to the conclusion that Luke's ecclesiology is fairly simple; he understands the *ἐκκλησία* to be one of the first two types, either the local congregation (singular), or a network of congregations in a larger area (plural). However, there are two other references in Acts to the Christian *ἐκκλησία*, which have attracted the attention of scholars because they may point to a more developed and 'catholic' (Pauline) ecclesiology. The first is 9.31: 'The church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria (*ἐκκλησία καθ' ὅλης τῆς Ἰουδαίας καὶ Γαλιλαίας καὶ Σαμαρείας*) had peace, being built up (*εἶχεν εἰρήνην οἰκοδομουμένην*); and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase (*ἐπληθύνετο*).'<sup>31</sup> Note the singular *ἐκκλησία* and verbs and participles.

In an article on Luke's use of *ἐκκλησία*, K. N. Giles argues that Acts 9.31 is a problematic occurrence of *ἐκκλησία* because it is unique in the NT; nowhere else is it used in the singular of Christians spread out in different locations, and when Paul uses it in the universal sense (the worldwide church), he never limits it geographically.<sup>32</sup> Giles proposes two possible solutions, one that the text originally contained the plural *ἐκκλησίαι* with plural verbs and participles (referring to multiple 'churches'),<sup>33</sup> and a second that it was actually the singular *ἐκκλησία*, but with plural verbs and participles. If the second option was the case,

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<sup>29</sup> That these are local congregations can be sufficiently demonstrated from context in each of these texts, though Luke makes it explicit in three places: 8.11; 11.22, 'the church in Jerusalem'; 13.1, 'the church at Antioch'.

<sup>30</sup> The distributive phrase in the singular *κατ' ἐκκλησίαν* implies the plural here.

<sup>31</sup> This may be the beginning of a wider geographical meaning for *ἐκκλησία* in Acts, but it may also indicate a 'local' church which resided in more than one town. See Barrett, *Acts*, 1.472-5; 2.lxxxviii.

<sup>32</sup> K.N. Giles, 'Luke's Use of the term ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ with Special Reference to Acts 20.28 and 9.31', *NTS* 31 (1985): 135-42. This does not follow Luke's normal usage of *ἐκκλησία*, where he always uses the singular of a specific local congregation, and the plural to refer to multiple congregations in several towns.

<sup>33</sup> While Giles claims that the textual evidence only slightly favors the singular, this is clearly not the case, as p<sup>74</sup>, R, A, B, C, and many others have the singular, *ἐκκλησία*. This argument is thus unconvincing.

Luke would actually be giving a report on the Jerusalem congregation, which was recently scattered throughout 'Judea, Galilee and Samaria' by persecution (8.1).<sup>34</sup> In either case, Giles argues that Luke is not referring to the universal 'catholic' church in 9.31.

The second unusual reference is Acts 20.28: 'the church of God which he purchased with his own blood (τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἣν περιεποιήσατο διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἰδίου)'. This is problematic, because both the developed doctrine of 'the church of God' and the redemptive interpretation of Christ's death are unique in Acts, and are characteristically Pauline.<sup>35</sup> However one interprets the reference to the blood of God,<sup>36</sup> many scholars view 20.28 as speaking of a single worldwide body of all Christians, the *ecclesia catholica*.<sup>37</sup> However, Giles argues that these are not Luke's own theological ideas,<sup>38</sup> but that they are either Paul's direct ideas,<sup>39</sup> or traditional ideas which sounded like Paul's ideas.<sup>40</sup>

It is likely that Luke is aware of both the earlier local congregational view, and the more advanced (Pauline) universal view of the church.<sup>41</sup> He has undoubtedly been influenced by Paul and his theology, largely through his travels and relationship with him,

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<sup>34</sup> This would be a summary of the same story started in 8.1, and a report on how this one congregation was doing. Thus Luke is not actually speaking of a church in Galilee (he has not mentioned any evangelistic outreach there after Pentecost), but is speaking of the Jerusalem church, which has been scattered by persecution. It also helps to explain his use of the distributive expression καθ' ἑλης – they were scattered throughout that area. Giles proposes a possible textual history which would explain these variations.

<sup>35</sup> The phrase 'church of God', which implies a divinely ordained and initiated institution, appears 9 times in the NT, with each of the other 8 in Pauline epistles (see above). The idea of substitutionary atonement is also characteristically Pauline, with Lukan soteriology focusing more on the individual's response to the gospel in repentance or faith (see ch. 6). Cf. Eph 5.25-27, where Christ's death is also for the ἐκκλησία.

<sup>36</sup> This may refer to Christ as God: 'with the blood of his Own', that is, Christ (cf. Rom 8.32), Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 426. This is also the conclusion of S. Walton, *Leadership and Lifestyle: The Portrait of Paul in the Miletus Speech and 1 Thessalonians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 94-98. On Christ's blood, cf. Rom 3.25; 5.9.

<sup>37</sup> That ἐκκλησία is used in a nonlocal sense here is the predominant view, but it is debated, Witherington, *Acts*, 624. The Ephesian elders are clearly being asked to shepherd their particular flock, and not the church universal. If Luke uses ἐκκλησία for both local gatherings and the universal church, this implies that for Luke each local grouping of Christians is actually the total church in the place in which it exists; Barrett, *Acts*, 2.lxxxviii. This idea is emphasized by Paul, see Gal 1.13; 1 Cor 11.22; 1.2; 2 Cor 1.1.

<sup>38</sup> Luke never rejects these ideas, but he does not develop them. They do not 'sound like' his theology.

<sup>39</sup> The context of this saying is without doubt the most Pauline section of Acts, with many other parallels with the Pauline epistles (see discussion in ch. 13). It is set in one of the 'we sections' of Acts, which would mean that Luke was likely present for this speech, and may well have used shorthand to take notes.

<sup>40</sup> If ancient historians did not have exact sources, they would compose speeches appropriate to the occasion.

<sup>41</sup> If he is writing in 80 or 90, he surely would be familiar with the universal Pauline conception. Luke is not theologically ignorant, even if his theology is not as complex as Paul's.

and Luke's writings show glimpses of this influence.<sup>42</sup> He appreciates the importance of the broader Pauline theological perspectives, even if he fails to fully grasp their implications, and he attempts to faithfully convey them 'as Paul would have' in 20.28.

However, Luke's goal is different than Paul's; Luke is not attempting to write theology in Acts, but more practical missional instruction for his readers.<sup>43</sup> He focuses on the *ἐκκλησία* as the local group of gathered believers, linked to others in a loose network of relational connections, for rhetorical reasons, because this is the practical missional structure that he is advocating and endorsing throughout Acts. His readers grasping that they are part of a worldwide body of believers is not Luke's primary purpose; instead he is calling them to reproduce the local, tangible expression of the *ἐκκλησία* everywhere they go.<sup>44</sup>

### 8.2.2 *Ἐκκλησία in Acts – Narrative Analysis*

Luke's first uses *ἐκκλησία* in Acts 5.11, in the context of the sobering story of Ananias and Sapphira: 'great fear came over the whole church' (*φόβος μέγας ἐφ' ὅλην τὴν ἐκκλησίαν*).<sup>45</sup>

Luke wants to stress at this point that the followers of Jesus have a sense of self-understanding, of being a corporate entity: the people of God.<sup>46</sup> This also explains God's fierce response to Ananias and Sapphira's violation of this holy community; no breach of fellowship or disloyalty can be tolerated amongst the vulnerable new people of God, the *ἐκκλησία*.<sup>47</sup> The ensuing consequence only reminds the people of who they are – the community in which the Spirit dwells, and which that same Spirit jealously protects.

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<sup>42</sup> Luke may not fully grasp the implications of Paul's universal ecclesiology, or his redemptive atonement Christology. If this is the case, he certainly is not alone; cf. 2 Pet 3.15,16.

<sup>43</sup> This is not to imply that Acts lacks theology, but that it is not Luke's primary purpose, as it may be Paul's.

<sup>44</sup> Thus our thesis sheds light on the question of Luke's ecclesiology, and helps us to understand the practical reasons why Luke presents the local *ἐκκλησία* as he does.

<sup>45</sup> This fearful response to the holy is common in Luke-Acts: Lk 1.12,65; 2.9; 7.16; 8.37; Acts 2.43; 19.17. Witherington, *Acts*, 219.

<sup>46</sup> Although D has it in 2.47, this is probably a later scribal addition. The language reflects the move from more to less Semitic language, as the narrative progresses from more to less Semitic settings; Witherington, *Acts*, 220.

<sup>47</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, 161; Marshall, *Acts*, 113-14.

This instance introduces Luke's primary theological connotation: the *ἐκκλησία* is the new people of God, the called out ones, the unique community of believers, worth protecting and preserving at any cost.<sup>48</sup> The second occurrence is 8.3: 'Saul began ravaging the church (*ἐλυμαίνετο τὴν ἐκκλησίαν*), entering house after house (*κατὰ τοὺς οἴκους*), and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison (*παρεδίδου εἰς φυλακὴν*).' This underscores a secondary theme of the *ἐκκλησία* in Acts, that it will be the recipient of much persecution, even to the point of imprisonment and death.<sup>49</sup> It also establishes the fundamental structural expression of the Christian *ἐκκλησία*, house to house.<sup>50</sup>

The third (9.31) summarizes the health of the church in the Jewish regions, and sets the stage for further outward geographical expansion, as has already been seen. It also lists Luke's ideal church characteristics: peace (*εἰρήνην*), being built up (*οἰκοδομουμένη*), the fear of the Lord (*τῷ φόβῳ τοῦ Κυρίου*), and the comfort and exhortation of the Holy Spirit (*τῇ παρακλήσει τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος*). These qualities allow it to continue to grow and missionally increase (*ἐπληθύνετο*), which is an indication of a church's well-being in Acts.

From 9.31, Luke continues to develop and reinforce this theme of the called out people of God, being established not just in Jerusalem, but in Antioch, Ephesus, and other areas of the Empire. This culminates in the final occurrence of the word (20.28) where the *ἐκκλησία* is possibly the universal body of Christians, set apart and redeemed by the bloody sacrifice of Christ himself.<sup>51</sup> There is a progression in Acts of the meaning of *ἐκκλησία* from the basic local congregation, to the more advanced universal body of believers.<sup>52</sup> For Luke, this worldwide conception of the *ἐκκλησία* is a current reality only in embryonic form, for he

<sup>48</sup> Like the community at Qumran they claimed to be 'the new people of God', Barrett, *Acts*, 1.271.

<sup>49</sup> As we have seen, this theme of the suffering of the people of God is repeated consistently throughout Acts. Persecution and suffering are to be expected, particularly if the church takes its missional calling seriously.

<sup>50</sup> The structural importance of the *οἶκος* will be discussed in the following chapter.

<sup>51</sup> See previous discussion on this verse. For more on this statement, see Barrett, *Acts*, 2.974-977; Witherington, *Acts*, 623-624. Clear parallels with Pauline theology are unusual in Acts. Giles, 'ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ', 137.

<sup>52</sup> We will investigate this progression in Acts in more detail in ch. 10.

is aware of the limitations of the church's influence. It is therefore primarily a motivating missional goal, to be pursued at all costs, that all peoples, everywhere, would hear, and the church's sphere of influence would become truly universal in scope.<sup>53</sup>

### **8.3 Conclusion – Luke's Missional and Ecclesiological Purposes in Acts**

Acts employs all of the conventional uses of *ἐκκλησία* in the ancient Greco-Roman world. But for Luke the most critical of these is the group of gathered Christians in a particular locale, with a shared belief system.<sup>54</sup> Throughout Acts, Luke is intentionally establishing a distinctively Christian identity. Although *ἐκκλησία* is not a new word, its meaning and connotations are new and different, and they point towards the new people of God, the called out ones which God has appointed to follow him and to further expand his church.

In Acts the followers of Jesus hold the church as the highest priority. Whether it is establishing it, broadening its influence, guarding its unity, or training and supporting it, their efforts are *always* focused towards the church. Luke is arguing in Acts that the *ἐκκλησία*, made up of the newly called-out people of God, is *the* irreplaceable structure of the early Christian missionary movement. It is both the springboard for its missional proclamation, and the vehicle for its ongoing advancement and growth.

Luke's is writing about the church, to the church, and he means for his readers to understand that the *ἐκκλησία* is the only appropriate structure for mission. Evangelism must emerge from local networks of churches, and result in the establishment and growth of local churches; otherwise it is a departure from the precedent set down by the earliest Christian missionaries. Gaining converts is not enough; missionaries must build churches.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> This is likely why Luke does not refer to the universal church much in Acts – he does not see this as a reality fulfilled, but as a promised potential. The universally influential church is Luke's ultimate missional goal and motivation, present in seed form, but destined to become a fuller reality as the church engages in its mission.

<sup>54</sup> As we have seen, there are 19 references to the Christian church, and four to other meanings of *ἐκκλησία*.

<sup>55</sup> It is interesting to speculate about the historical situation of Luke's audience. Was this a debate? Were there advocates of mission outside of the bounds of the church, such as wandering mystics, or evangelists who did not prioritize involving their new converts in a local body of believers? For Luke, this is unacceptable – all mission must lead directly to the building up of the *ἐκκλησία*.

Luke seeks to strengthen the church's unique sense of Christian identity and self-definition, amidst the complex religious milieu of the Empire.<sup>56</sup> For Luke, the Christian *ἐκκλησία* is the new people of God, called out for his own missional purposes, and worth protecting and defending at all costs (5.11). As such, believers should expect suffering and persecution (8.3).<sup>57</sup> Luke's challenge to his readers is to persevere in trial and persecution, trusting that God's purpose will prevail.<sup>58</sup> He also exhorts them to not lose sight of their missional calling and purpose, even in the midst of suffering.<sup>59</sup>

For Luke, the healthy *ἐκκλησία* is filled with peace, continually being built up, and characterized by the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and when it is thriving in this way, it is missional at the core, continually expanding and advancing (9.31). The ultimate expression of this is the theological conception of the universal church, made up of people from every nation and tribe in the entire world (20.28; 1.8).<sup>60</sup> Luke understands this as both a current reality, in nascent form, and a future goal, which can only be accomplished if the church continues to engage with its mission. This is Luke's primary ideological purpose, that the church would advance and become truly universal in its influence and impact. For this reason, Luke's presentation of the *ἐκκλησία* is mostly practical and local. He is calling his readers, the church of his generation, to reproduce this flexible missional structure everywhere. For Luke, this is best done *κατὰ τοὺς οἴκους* (8.3).

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<sup>56</sup> Luke is speaking to his church, and attempting to justify the growing separation between the Christian church and Judaism. He also may be drawing deliberate contrasts with other Greco-Roman religions as well, and particularly the Imperial Cult, in his attempt to establish a distinctive Christian identity. His conception of the *ἐκκλησία* is an important part of his attempt to give his readers a sense of unique self-understanding.

<sup>57</sup> Both Peter (1 Pet 4.12-13) and John (1 Jn 3.13) had a similar goal in their writings.

<sup>58</sup> Paul's trial narratives (Acts 23-26) are a model for later Christians in positions of trial and imprisonment. Similarly, the way that the church responded to persecution, such as by praying for more boldness (4.29-31), by obeying God rather than men when threatened (5.29), by continuing to move forward with the mission (8.1-4), and even by praying and worshipping (16.25), are examples for Luke's readers to imitate.

<sup>59</sup> This is the lesson of Acts 8.1-4: the church is scattered by persecution, yet everywhere they go they proclaim the gospel, and God continues to move powerfully and advance his church in supernatural ways. This is a clear model for Luke's readers to emulate.

<sup>60</sup> Even if 20.28 is not a reference to the universal church, Luke clearly has this goal in mind in a geographical sense, as shown by 1.8, and the overarching geographical progression of the Acts narrative.

## CHAPTER 9 – THE HOUSE AND HOUSEHOLD – ΟΙΚΟΣ

When the *ἐκκλησία* in Acts is examined more closely, a crucial complementary structure for mission is discovered: local congregations met in the private homes (*οἶκος*) of their members.

### 9.1 Introduction – The Ancient World

Nearly every NT scholar agrees that until the fourth century,<sup>3</sup> when Constantine began building basilicas throughout the Empire, Christ-followers regularly gathered in private homes constructed for family use, not in church buildings built for public worship services.<sup>1</sup> Though there are examples of city-wide church gatherings,<sup>2</sup> and possibilities of other group meetings in public places such as the street or marketplace,<sup>3</sup> there is no record of a consistent gathering of the *ἐκκλησία* in any location other than a home. Because Christianity did not have the status of a recognized religion in its first centuries, there was no possibility of a legal public meeting place, so early Christians made use of the only facilities available, the private dwellings of supportive families.<sup>4</sup> For primitive Christianity, church was house-church, and there was no other option. This historical reality has many social, theological, ecclesiological, and missional implications.

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<sup>1</sup> R. W. Gehring, *House Church and Mission* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004): 1. This work is an important summary of research on the house-church movement in the early church, and also in the contemporary church. While most people lived in tall tenement flats or insulae, the space which the early Christians used would have mostly been the triclinium (and courtyard) of larger private domus-style homes. See Gehring, *House*, 313-20, Schnabel, *Mission*, 2.1591, 1600, 1624-25 for floor plans and reconstructions revealed by archaeology. See Gehring, *House*, 140-41 for archaeological details of various housing styles across the Empire.

<sup>2</sup> The early Jerusalem church had access to the temple, which they used in the early days for larger gatherings, when they were still contained within the larger Jewish religious system: Acts 2.46; 3.1-10; 5.21-24,42. This does not mean that other early churches had large, citywide meetings, for they would not have had the venue to do so with any regularity. It does seem that the entire church at Antioch was gathered together in 15.30; how or where is not known. But this was not the pattern. The 'church' and the house church were synonymous, meeting regularly in individual members' homes across the city.

<sup>3</sup> E. Adams read a paper in the final plenary of day 3 of the 2008 BNTS conference in Durham, entitled 'The Earliest Christian Meeting Places', which claimed that NT scholars have overdrawn evidence to suggest that houses were the only place Christians met for worship. From both a literary and an archaeological perspective, he argued that we should give more weight to other meeting options, including shops, bathhouses, storehouses, and outside locales. He also gave two similar papers at the Irish Biblical Association's annual conference in Dublin, in April 2010: 'The New Testament House Church: A Reassessment', and 'Early Christian Meeting Places: Beyond Domestic Spaces.' This is an important area of research, which requires more exploration.

<sup>4</sup> See J. Murphy-O'Connor, 'House-Churches and the Eucharist', *Christianity at Corinth: The Quest for the Pauline Church*, E. Adams, D. G. Horrell, eds. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004): 129-38, for a social scientific reconstruction of how an opulent Roman villa in Corinth, which has been thoroughly excavated, may have contributed to the problems Paul discusses concerning the Eucharist (1 Cor 11.17-34).



### 9.1.1 An *Oikos* Society

The early Christians' reliance on the household mirrored trends within their society. Scholars agree that the *oikos* was the fundamental building block of ancient society and economy.<sup>5</sup>

The social dimension of the ancient *oikos* was the household, which consisted of the father, mother, children, slaves, clients, and often the extended family. These relationships determined daily life more than anything else, and had financial, familial/social, and legal implications. A person gained a sense of identity and belonging through their *oikos*.

The physical dimension of the ancient *oikos* was the house itself. It was a home for people to come to, and a 'launching pad' for an individual's outer life: people entered into relationships with others from the *oikos*, and built the *polis*, the ancient city-state, and with it the entire social and political system.<sup>6</sup> The ancient *oikos* 'is not just one social and economic form among others but rather the basic social and economic form not only for the ancient world and the New Testament but presumably for every pre-industrial sedentary culture as well.'<sup>7</sup> This allows scholars to refer to the NT world as an '*oikos* society'.

The dominance of the *oikos* in Greco-Roman culture helps to explain why early Christians (perhaps sub-consciously) chose house churches as their primary way of ordering and structuring their communities. This was the default position in an *oikos* society.

### 9.1.2 The Patronage System

If one of the defining characteristics of the *oikos* was the private domestic house in which the extended family lived and related to one another, the other was the structure of the patronage

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<sup>5</sup> E.g., Judge, *Social Pattern*, 49-61; Verner, *Household of God*, 27-81; J. H. Elliot, *A Home for the Homeless* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), esp. ch. 4; Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 75-78; L. M. White, *Building God's House in the Roman World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990). Cf. F. V. Filson, 'The Significance of the Early House Churches', *JBL* 58 (1939): 105-12, who is one of the first to link house churches and the rapid expansion of early Christianity.

<sup>6</sup> Gehring, *House*, 17.

<sup>7</sup> D. Lürhmann, 'Neutestamentliche Haustafeln und Antike Ökonomie', *NTS* 27 (1981): 83-97, citing 87; trans., Gehring, *House*, 17.

system. This was a hierarchical social phenomenon based around the head of household, or house father/mother, who exercised authority in nearly all things within his or her *oikos*. Patrons tended to be fairly wealthy individuals, who either owned or rented their accommodation. They were generally educated, had experience as teachers within their *oikos*, and they managed their households financially and administratively. In addition to their family, they took on 'clients', for whom they had responsibility and protective duties. In return for their patronage, their clientele afforded them honor, service, and loyalty. These mutually beneficial relationships were based on values such as obligation and reciprocity.<sup>8</sup> According to Judge, such patronal relationships are the hermeneutical key to the daily functioning of ancient Roman society:

The republic recognized not only the sweeping powers the Roman *pater familias* enjoyed over his personal family, bond and free alike, but also the rights and duties imposed by the relationship of *clientela*. Freedmen, who had formerly been members of a household through slavery, retained their link with it, and in some respects their obligations, as its clients. Others also freely associated themselves with it for their mutual benefit. Loyalty to the household interest was expected, though the authority of the patron was grounded in his trustworthiness, which guaranteed that the material and social needs of the client's family were met.<sup>9</sup>

This ancient patronage system was significant for the early Christian mission and its rapid expansion.<sup>10</sup> It helps to explain the '*oikos* formula', which is found four times in Acts: 'he [or she] was baptized [or came to faith] with his [or her] [entire] household'.<sup>11</sup> If a householder was converted and baptized, it would only be natural for their entire household

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. K. Lomas, T. Cornell, *'Bread and Circuses': Euergetism and Municipal Patronage in Roman Italy* (London: Routledge, 2003); J. K. Chow, *Patronage and Power* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1992), esp. chs. 2 and 3; J. P. Sampley, *Pauline Partnership in Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), who examines how Paul uses the Roman legal terminology and concept of consensual *societas*, a contract of partnership linked to the patronage system; F. W. Danker, *Benefactor* (St. Louis: Clayton, 1982); A. Wallace-Hadrill, ed., *Patronage in Ancient Society* (London: Routledge, 1989); Clarke, *Christian Leadership*, 9-39; Saller, *Personal Patronage*.

<sup>9</sup> Judge, *Social Pattern*, 31.

<sup>10</sup> B. Holmberg, *Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles* (Lund: LiberLäromedel/Gleerup, 1978): 104-7; Elliot, *Home*, 188-199; White, *Building God's House*, 77-85, 140-148; Meeks, *Urban Christians*.

<sup>11</sup> Cornelius (Acts 10.1-2,22; 11.12b-14); Lydia (16.14-16); Philippian jailer (16.30-34); Crispus (18.8). 1 Cor 1.16 has an identical phrase (Stephanas), corroborating this Pauline practice. For a literary study of the household conversion narratives in Acts, and their implications for the unity of Luke and Acts, D. L. Matson, *Household Conversion Narratives in Acts*, JSNT.SS 123 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), esp. 86-200.

to follow in their footsteps.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, it shows why Paul targeted homeowners in any new mission venture.<sup>13</sup> By recruiting a householder, he was able to win an entire household to the gospel, and quickly set up a base of operation in their house for local and regional mission.<sup>14</sup> This accelerated the expansion of the church, by creating micro-communities of faith, which then became the seeds of the church that would develop in that city and area.

## 9.2 *ὄλχος* in Acts and the Ancient World

The ancient literary references to *ὄλχος* are predictably numerous. As the various meanings of *ὄλχος* are explored, all of the 25 occurrences of the word in Acts will be noted, and various ways that Luke uses *ὄλχος*, and its diminutive, *ὄλχα* (12 times), will be analyzed.<sup>15</sup>

### 9.2.1 A Physical Structure

The most common meaning of *ὄλχος* is a physical house,<sup>16</sup> or a place of dwelling,<sup>17</sup> and at times certain rooms within the house.<sup>18</sup> Acts often uses *ὄλχος* to refer to a person's dwelling place, such as the house with the upper room in Jerusalem (2.2), Pharaoh's home (7.20), the

<sup>12</sup> Crossley, *Why Christianity Happened*, contains examples of the conversion of households to Christianity and Judaism, and the related practice of circumcising the Gentile male slaves of a converted household, 100, 157-71. Cf. the example of Onesimus, in Paul's letter to Philemon, which was likely a household conversion (led by Philemon) in which Onesimus had not fully converted, or at least was not fully observant, because of his involuntary incorporation into the Christian community, 161-163.

<sup>13</sup> See 1 Cor 1.14-16: Crispus, Gaius, and Stephanas were all householders, *Gehring, House*, 185-187. Cf. Acts 18.1-8 (Crispus). See also the ex. of Jason in Thessalonica (Acts 17.1-9), and Lydia and the jail keeper in Philippi (Acts 16).

<sup>14</sup> *Gehring, House*, 187. N. H. Taylor, 'The Social Nature of Conversion in the Early Christian World', *Modeling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament*, P. F. Esler, ed. (London: Routledge, 1995): 128-36, deals with the social implications of household conversion, and identifies three levels of Christian conversion: 1) the *conviction* that Christian belief is true, 2) the *social reorientation* into Christian community, and 3) the *conformity* to the discipline of the community. Early Christianity attracted converts who displayed varying degrees of commitment, and who were incorporated into the life of the community to varying degrees. Their abandonment of previous beliefs, practices and social relationships also varied accordingly. Household conversion played a role in this, as people who were involuntarily incorporated into the community (following their householder) generally displayed lower levels of devotion and adherence, at least initially.

<sup>15</sup> The volume of occurrences is indicative of the importance that Luke attaches to the *ὄλχος*: 2.2,36,46; 5.42; 7.10,20,42,46,47,49; 8.3; 10.2,22,30; 11.12,13,14; 16.15 [twice],31,34; 18.8; 19.16; 20.20; 21.8; and the *ὄλχα*: 4.34; 9.11,17; 10.6,17,32; 11.11; 12.12; 16.32; 17.5; 18.7 [twice]. See also *πανοικία*, 16.34b.

<sup>16</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus*, 1: 'at the house of Morychus; that house which is near the temple'; Josephus, *Ant.*, 4.74: 'the various private homes'; Athenaeus, *Learned Banqueters*, 12.54a: 'a house built capable of containing a hundred couches'; Diodorus Siculus, *Library*, 17.28.4: 'to go each to his own house and there, enjoying the best of food and drink with their families'; Strabo, *Geography*, 13.1.38: 'he had bidden to report to the people at home.'

<sup>17</sup> Achilles' dwelling place, Homer, *Iliad*, 24.471,572; the Cyclop's cave, *Odyssey*, 9.478; a tent, Gen 31.33.

<sup>18</sup> Xen., *Symposium*, 2.18: 'a moderate-sized room [*ὄλχος*] large enough for me (just as but now this room [*ὄλχημα*, the proper word for a room] was large enough for the lad)'; Homer, *Odyssey*, 1.356; 19.514,598.

houses that Saul entered to persecute Christians (8.3), Cornelius' house in Caesarea (10.22,30; 11.12,13), Lydia's house in Philippi (16.15b), the Philippian jail keeper's house (16.34a), the house in which the seven sons of Sceva were humiliated in Ephesus (19.16), and Philip's house in Caesarea (21.8). Luke also refers to the church meeting *κατ' οἶκον* in two summary passages (2.46; 5.42), and in Paul's reference to house to house teaching (20.20).<sup>19</sup>

Luke also uses *οἶκλα* 12 times in 11 verses in Acts to refer to a person's physical dwelling:<sup>20</sup> the houses sold for the poor in Jerusalem (4.34), the house of Judas on Straight street in Damascus (9.11,17), the house of Simon the tanner by the sea in Joppa (10.6,17,32; 11.11; four occurrences),<sup>21</sup> the house of Mary in Jerusalem (12.12), the house of the Philippian jailer (16.32),<sup>22</sup> the house of Jason in Thessalonica (17.5), and the house of Titius Justus in Corinth (18.7; twice in this verse).

*Οἶκος* is also used in the ancient world to designate a large building or significant structure, which may or may not be a private dwelling place, such as the king's palace,<sup>23</sup> the 'house of prayer',<sup>24</sup> the house of God,<sup>25</sup> or specifically the temple in Jerusalem.<sup>26</sup> Luke refers to the Jerusalem temple twice as the *οἶκος* built for God (Acts 7.47,49, quoting Isa 66.1,2).

<sup>19</sup> This distributive sense of the word is best translated 'house to house', or simply 'at home'. The point in both passages is to contrast the church's private house meetings with their public meetings in the temple.

<sup>20</sup> Their meanings are identical, H.G. Liddell, R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed., rev. suppl. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996): 1203. Cf. Homer, *Iliad*, 6.15; 20.64; *Odyssey*, 12.4. Though *οἶκλα* can also refer to a social household or family (cf. Mt 12.25; 13.57; Mk 3.25; 6.4; Jn 4.35; 1 Cor 16.15), Luke never uses it in this way in Luke-Acts, but always merely as the physical structure people live in.

<sup>21</sup> Luke is consistent – Cornelius' house is an *οἶκος*, while Simon's house is an *οἶκλα*. This implies that for Luke's there is a distinction between the words (though cf. following note, 16.32-34), probably that *οἶκλα* refers to a smaller house (Simon the tanner's), and *οἶκος* a larger house (Cornelius the centurion's). This difference is not apparent in ancient literature in general, as *οἶκλα* can refer to palaces (Herod., *Hist.*, 1.35,41,44, the house of Croesus; 1.98, the royal palace; 3.53,140), and other larger structures, as well as to private homes.

<sup>22</sup> Luke here calls the jailer's house an *οἶκλα*, while two verses later he calls the same physical structure an *οἶκος* (16.34). This indicates that Luke is using the words interchangeably, though cf. following footnote.

<sup>23</sup> Josephus, *Ant.*, 9.102: 'spoiled the country and the king's house [*οἶκος του βασιλεως*]'; 2 Kgdms 11.8: 'David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house, and wash your feet." And Uriah went out of the king's house'; 15.35: 'whatever you hear from the king's house, you shall report to Zadok and Abiathar the priests'.

<sup>24</sup> Mt 21.13; Mk 11.17; Lk 19.46: 'my house shall be a house of prayer', quoting Isa 56.7.

<sup>25</sup> Herod., *Hist.*, 8.143: 'trusting in the gods and the heroes as allies, for whom he had no respect when he set fire to their houses and to their sacred images'; Plato, *Phaedrus*, 24e: 'Hestia alone abides at home in the house of heaven'; Mt 12.4; Mk 2.26; Lk 6.4: 'how he entered the house of God' (*τὸν οἶκον τοῦ Θεοῦ*).

<sup>26</sup> 3 Kgdms [1 Kgs] 7.31: 'in the house of God'; Jn 2.16a: 'stop making my Father's house a place of business.'

It is also used figuratively in the NT, referring to the body as the temple or dwelling place of God (1 Pet 2.5), and the church as the household of God (1 Pet 4.17; 1 Tim 3.15).<sup>27</sup> Luke refers to the body as the habitation of unclean spirits (Lk 11.24; cf. Mt 12.44).<sup>28</sup>

### 9.2.2 A Social Structure

Οἶκος is also the social structure of the household, the people who live within the house.<sup>29</sup>

Luke's Gospel refers to this social dimension in Jesus' missional instructions to his disciples (Lk 10.5), and when mentioning Zacchaeus' household (Lk 19.9). In Acts, Luke speaks in this way of the households of Cornelius (10.2; 11.14), Lydia (16.15a), the Philippian jailer (16.31), and Crispus (18.8).<sup>30</sup> He also uses the derivative πανοικί, 'the whole household' (πάς + οἶκος), referring to the Philippian jailer's household (16.34b).

Οἶκος is also used in the ancient world to refer to a clan or tribe of people descended from a common ancestor, such as 'the house of David', or 'the house of Israel'.<sup>31</sup> This is a common LXX usage,<sup>32</sup> and Luke refers to ὁ οἶκος Δαυίδ in his Gospel three times (Lk 1.27,69; 2.4). In Acts, Peter refers to ὁ οἶκος Ἰσραὴλ in his evangelistic speech at Pentecost (2.36), Stephen uses the same expression in his speech (7.42, quoting Amos 5.25), and also uses σκήνωμα τῷ οἴκῳ Ἰακώβ (7.46).<sup>33</sup>

Finally, οἶκος can refer to what is inside of a house, such as a person's estate, possessions or property.<sup>34</sup> The only place in the NT that fits this description is in Acts, when

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<sup>27</sup> This image pictures God as the head of household, or house father, and his people his loyal and devoted οἶκος.

<sup>28</sup> This may have been literal for Luke, rather than figurative or allegorical.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica*, 2.68: 'with all of your household' (μετὰ ἔλου τοῦ οἴκου). The best way to tell the difference in Acts is to ask whether the οἶκος repents, or is saved – this indicates the household.

<sup>30</sup> Οἶκος is used in this way in all of the instances of the 'household formula' in Acts (see above). For other similar oikos formulas in the NT, cf. Tit 1.11; 1 Cor 1.16; 2 Tim 1.16; 4.19; Heb 3.2-6; 1 Tim 3.4ff.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. e.g., Josephus, *Ant.*, 2.202: 'the house of the Israelites'; 8.111: 'it is necessary for us to return thanks for what you have bestowed upon our house, and on the Hebrew people.'

<sup>32</sup> Cf. e.g., 3 Kgdms 12.19; 13.2; Amos 5.25; Jer 9.25; 38.31,33; Ex 19.3; Isa 2.5.

<sup>33</sup> This is uncertain textually, but is in multiple textual variations: p<sup>74</sup>, R, B, D... For similar NT usages, cf. Mt 10.6; 15.24; Heb 8.10.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. e.g., Herod., *Hist.*, 3.53: 'the Magus that Cambyses left in charge of his household'; Josephus, *War*, 6.282: 'packing up the baggage there in your house.'

Stephen speaks of Pharaoh making Joseph governor over Egypt and his whole household (ἡγούμενον ἐπ' Αἴγυπτον καὶ ὅλον τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ, 7.10; cf. Gen 41.40).<sup>35</sup>

### 9.2.3 Luke's Understanding of the *Oikos*

This brief analysis has revealed that Luke's usage of *oikos* is quite diverse, encompassing every meaning of the word known in the ancient world. Yet his preferred meaning is apparent: of the 25 occurrences of *oikos*, 14 refer to the architectural dwelling, and six refer to the social household. The remaining five have the other nuances of the word. When the 12 occurrences of *oikla* in Acts are added, all referring to the physical dwelling, and the one reference to *panoiki*, the frequency of references (38 total times) indicates the importance of the house and household to Luke.<sup>36</sup>

That the two primary meanings are distinct from one another for Luke can be shown by 16.15, which contains both meanings: 'when she [Lydia] and her *household* (ὁ οἶκος αὐτῆς) had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "...come into my *house* (εἰσελθόντες εἰς τὸν οἶκόν μου) and stay.'" The first refers to Lydia's social household, for a house cannot be baptized. The second refers to her dwelling place, because she invites her guests to enter it after her household has converted and been baptized. Another verse containing both meanings is 16.34.<sup>37</sup> These verses show that though the two primary meanings of *oikos* are similar and overlapping, their distinction is important for Luke. The physical house and the social structure it contains are targets for mission, and also facilitate mission in Acts.

In addition to these explicit occurrences in the text of Acts, Luke implies *oikos* many other times. The first narrative episode after the ascension takes place in the house with the

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<sup>35</sup> Pharaoh clearly did not make Joseph the ruler of his family members or social household, but he put all of his physical possessions, his estate, fully in Joseph's care and governorship.

<sup>36</sup> See footnote 15 above.

<sup>37</sup> 'He brought them into his *house* (εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ) and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his *whole household*' (ἠγαλλιάσατο πανοικεῖ πεπιστευκῶς τῷ Θεῷ). They could not have eaten 'in' a social network, and a house cannot believe in God. Though *panoikei* is a derivative of *oikos*, it is another way of referring to the entire household, and should be understood as a synonym to *πᾶς ὁ οἶκος* (11.14).

upper room (1.13-14).<sup>38</sup> This episode sets the stage for all of Acts; houses are the primary physical structure throughout the narrative. The last episode in Acts also takes place in a private home, where Paul stays for two years in rented quarters (*ἐν ἰδίῳ μισθώματι*), and preaches the Kingdom of God unhindered (28.30-31).<sup>39</sup> Once again, missional activity emerges directly out of a private home. By framing the Acts narrative with episodes that take place in houses, Luke underlines the significance of the *οἶκος* structure to Christian mission.

### ***9.3 Conclusion – The Missional Significance of the Οἶκος***

*Οἶκος* functions missionally in Acts in two distinct but interrelated ways.

#### ***9.3.1 A Target for Missional Outreach***

Both the physical dwelling place and the social household it contained were ideal targets for early Christian missionaries. Because ancient society was composed of these interlinking social networks, the primary goal of the missional Christian was to evangelize within their existing *οἶκος* locally, and also to reach out to new homes and households in other places.

When a missionary approached a new city or area, his or her first thought was how to engage with and break into an established *οἶκος* there.<sup>40</sup> This explains the householder evangelism patterns in Acts (and in Paul), for by gaining one convert, a missionary could almost instantly gain an entire *οἶκος*. This quickly became an embryonic church, with a social network already established. Similarly, if a member of an *οἶκος* was converted, he or she had a place of influence which yielded promising evangelistic opportunities with the other members of the household, which an outsider would not have had. All of these factors made the *οἶκος* the ideal target for Christian missional outreach.

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<sup>38</sup> Though Luke does not use *οἶκος* here, it is obvious that the disciples are waiting expectantly in Jerusalem for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in a private residence. That this is a house is made explicit at Pentecost, when the noise like a violent wind fills ‘the whole *house* (*δλον τὸν οἶκον*) where they were sitting’, 2.2.

<sup>39</sup> *Μισθώμα* here has the root *μισθόω* (to hire or rent, cf. Mt 20.1), meaning a rented house in this context.

<sup>40</sup> This can be seen clearly in Paul’s missional strategies, examined in part 4. He always searches for the *οἶκος* with which he has the most natural connection and rapport when approaching a new city.

### 9.3.2 A Launching-Point for Missional Outreach

For Luke, the *oikos* is also the ideal launching-point for further outreach.<sup>41</sup> The built-in community, cohesion, leadership structure, outward credibility, relational influence, and social networks (business, associations, community involvement, etc.) of an *oikos* and its head of household make it perfectly suited as a social base for mission. Similarly, the physical aspects of a house, with its resources, gathering spaces, food and shelter, make it ideal as a material base for mission. When an *oikos* becomes a base for outreach, it has actually become a house church, the fusion of the *oikos* and the *ekklesia*.

These two functions of the *oikos* create a missional cycle. The unreached household functions as an evangelical target, and an ideal goal for missionaries. But when they gain the household, it becomes a base for mission into other households around it. These in turn begin the process again, in a missional cycle of outreach, establishing, and further outreach.

### 9.3.3 Luke's Rhetorical Purposes

Luke is not simply 'reporting' on all of this; he is actively advocating it. He wants his readers to understand that the *oikos* is *still* the most effective target and base for mission. Luke is challenging the church of his day to emulate the earliest church, and engage in *oikos*-focused, householder evangelism. He is urging them to establish new *oikos*-based churches. These churches will then become active hubs for mission in their own right, reaching out in their communities and regions. In Acts Luke presents the *oikos* as the crucial missional structure for both the initial evangelistic contact, and the ongoing mission of the church.

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<sup>41</sup> The *oikos* is not the only launching point for mission in Acts, although it is clearly the primary one which Luke is advocating. In Athens there is no mention of homes, and Paul evangelizes in the public synagogue, the marketplace (*agorai*), and the Areopagus (17.17-19). Similarly, in Ephesus the primary evangelistic launching points are the synagogue and the lecture hall of Tyrannus (19.8-10). Given the repeated pattern in Acts, one can assume that new believers are still gathered in private homes, which function as the starting points for further outreach in their cities and areas.



## CHAPTER 10 – THE HOUSE CHURCH – ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ ΚΑΤ’ ΟΙΚΟΝ

This chapter combines the *ἐκκλησία* and the *οἶκος* to examine the *ἐκκλησία κατ’ οἶκον*, or house church, within Acts and early Christianity.<sup>1</sup> A fully functioning ‘house church’ is a group of Christians that meets regularly in a private home, and possesses its own religious life, including regular gatherings for worship, which contain evangelistic and instructional proclamation, the celebration of baptism, communion, prayer, and fellowship.<sup>2</sup>

Organizational structures are further indications of a house church in the fullest sense.

### 10.1. Background

#### 10.1.1 Possible Models for the Christian House Churches

The basic structural influence on early Christian churches was the structure of the *οἶκος*, which emphasized the hospitality of the head of household as the key to the gathering place. The degree to which early Christians consciously modeled their house churches on the ancient house and household structure is uncertain, as the *οἶκος* was fundamental to virtually everything about ancient society, and therefore embedded in everyday life.

In addition to the *οἶκος*, it is possible to apply other models from early Christianity’s religious, intellectual, and social environments to the house church.<sup>3</sup> For many scholars, the synagogue is the primary *direct* influence on the formation and structure of the early house churches.<sup>4</sup> Luke’s frequent reference to the *συναγωγή* in Acts supports this position.<sup>5</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Gehring, House*, 1-27 for a history of scholarship on the house church; p. 16 for bibliography of monographs, articles, and commentaries up to 2000. He highlights seven studies in the 1980s, when a renewal of interest in the early house churches occurred: D. von Allmen, *La famille de Dieu: La symbolique familiale dans le paulinisme*, *Orbis biblicus et orientalis* 41 (Fribourg: Éditions universitaires, 1981); R. Banks, *Paul’s Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in their Cultural Setting*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994, orig. 1980); Elliot, *Home*; H. J. Klauck, *Hausgemeinde und Hauskirche im frühen Christentum*, *Stuttgarter Bibelstudien* 103 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1981); L. M. White, ‘*Domus Ecclesiae – Domus Dei: Adaptation and Development in the Setting for Early Christian Assembly*’, PhD diss. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); B. B. Blue, ‘*In Public and Private: The Role of the House Church in Early Christianity*’, PhD diss. (Aberdeen: University Press of Aberdeen, 1989).

<sup>2</sup> Following *Gehring, House*, 27.

<sup>3</sup> We cannot pursue any models in depth here, but will simply mention them as important background.

<sup>4</sup> B. B. Blue, ‘*In Public*’, 127, 144-146.

argument is strengthened if one accepts that many of the earliest Christian converts came from the Jewish synagogue setting,<sup>6</sup> and if it can be shown that house synagogues were already common during the time of the NT, not only in the Diaspora but in Palestine as well.<sup>7</sup>

Scholars have put forward many other propositions, such as the house and private gatherings of the Imperial cult, the Isis, Serapis, Cybele, and Mithras cults and other mystery religions, and Orphism.<sup>8</sup> Others argue that the first Christians imitated associations, whether *collegia*,<sup>9</sup> or voluntary associations.<sup>10</sup> Others maintain that Pauline house churches were

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<sup>5</sup> Luke references (often multiple) synagogues in 10 locations, in 20 verses: Acts 6.9 (the Freedmen, Jerusalem); 9.2,20 (Damascus); 13.5 (Salamis); 13.14,42,43 (Pisidian Antioch); 14.1 (Iconium); 15.21; 17.1 (Thessalonica); 17.10 (Berea); 17.17 (Athens); 18.4,7 (Corinth); 18.19,26; 19.8 (Ephesus); 22.19; 24.12 (Jerusalem); 26.11. The synagogue was a starting point for evangelism, and therefore likely a structural influence on Christianity.

<sup>6</sup> The NT account is clear that there were multiple Jewish converts in the early days, and particularly among the core leadership of the earliest church. These people would have been influenced by the synagogue structure.

<sup>7</sup> For the debate about whether the NT's portrayal of extensive Jewish house synagogues reflects the authors' time period more than the NT period, see Gehring, *House*, 30. J. Neusner, *Formative Judaism: Religious, Historical and Literary Studies* (Chico: Scholars, 1982), maintains that it is anachronistic (along with others). For the evidence (mainly in Josephus, Philo, and the Rabbinical sources), and a reconstruction of the emergence of the synagogue prior to 70 CE, cf. R. Riesner, 'Synagogues in Jerusalem', *Acts in Its Palestinian Setting*, R. Bauckham, ed., AIFCS 4 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995): 209, 'There is nothing anachronistic in Luke's and the other evangelists' picture that there were many synagogues in Galilee and in Jerusalem. Many of the details given by Luke are corroborated by other literary, epigraphical and archaeological sources'; L. I. Levine, 'The Second Temple Synagogue: The Formative Years', *The Synagogue in Late Antiquity*, L. I. Levine, ed. (Philadelphia: The American Schools of Oriental Research: 1987): 7, 'By the end of the Second Temple period, the synagogue had become a central institution in Jewish life. It could be found everywhere, in Israel and the Diaspora, east and west, in cities as well as in villages'.

<sup>8</sup> For a treatment of the different models, see Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 75-84; Verner, *Household of God*, 6-9; Harland, *Associations*, who deals with various ancient associations, Imperial Cults, Synagogues, and Christian congregations in Roman Asia, and how they interacted with one another.

<sup>9</sup> *Collegia* were legal associations which functioned as professional guilds and social clubs

<sup>10</sup> This argument has been around for well over a century. See E. Hatch, *The Organization of the Early Churches*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Longmans, 1901): 'Those circumstances [local charitable associations] seem to account for, and to explain...the form which the organization of those communities took, and the titles which their officers bore', 36. See also Judge, *Social Pattern*, 40-48. Harland, *Associations*, 28-53, emphasizes the role of social networks in the forming of these associations, and proposes five categories of associations, revolving around their social connections, with historical examples of each: 1) *household*, 2) *ethnic or geographic*, 3) *neighborhood or location*, 4) *occupational*, and 5) *temple or cult*. Of these, the household associations are most relevant to Christian house churches, though Harland claims that all types of associations were influenced by the household in their organizational structures (illustrated esp. in architecture and the conventions of benefaction), and in their language of familial affection (e.g., 'mother', 'father', 'brothers', 'sisters') to express identity and feelings of belonging and community, 31-33.

patterned after Hellenistic schools of philosophy,<sup>11</sup> or a combination of *collegia* and philosophical schools.<sup>12</sup> Others see influences from the Qumran community.<sup>13</sup>

Most of these social arrangements were not exclusive in the ancient world, but existed in overlapping involvements with one another, and certain Christian converts would have been involved in and influenced by each of them. They all have a configuration of social networks, which uses and adapts private, usually domestic settings, and which depends on patronage for ongoing expansion. It is therefore likely that all of the aforementioned models had some influence on early Christian structures at least *indirectly*, through their influence on the Jewish synagogue. Early Christians had to establish their churches outwardly within the confines of Roman law, e.g., as a household-based voluntary association (or possibly a corporation of foreigners), yet their theological self-understanding as the *ἐκκλησία*, or the family/house (*οἶκος*) of God, was surely most influenced by the Jewish synagogue.<sup>14</sup>

### 10.1.2 Jesus' Usage of Houses

The foundations for later Christian *οἶκος* usage are found in the life and ministry of Jesus. As has already been seen, Jewish synagogues were probably commonplace in the time of Jesus, and it can be assumed that particularly in poorer areas, such as Galilee, these were house synagogues rather than elaborate separate structures.<sup>15</sup> The Gospels report multiple

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<sup>11</sup> Such as Platonism, Peripateticism (following Aristotle), Cynicism, Epicureanism, and Stoicism. Advocates of this view claim that the philosophical schools offered ideas, language patterns, and a social model that can be compared with the house churches. See Acts 19.9 (the school of Tyrannus, τῆ σχολῆς Τυράννου) for a possible example of this. Cf. 17.18 (Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, Ἐπικουρείων καὶ Στωϊκῶν φιλοσόφων); 17.21.

<sup>12</sup> E. A. Judge, 'The Early Christians as Scholastic Community', *Journal of Religious History* 1 (1960): 4-15; 125-37 (2 parts); R. L. Wilken, 'Collegia, Philosophical Schools, and Theology', *Early Church History*, S. Benko, J. J. O'Rourke, eds. (London: Oliphants, 1972): 268-91.

<sup>13</sup> This is particularly true of the Jerusalem community of goods. See B. J. Capper, 'The Palestinian Cultural Context of Earliest Christian Community of Goods', *Acts in Its Palestinian Setting*, R. Bauckham, ed., AIFCS 4 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995): 323-356; D. L. Mealand, 'Community of Goods and Utopian Allusions in Acts II-IV', *JTS* 28 (1977): 96-99. This view is sometimes contested, and scholars know relatively little about the Essene model in actual practice. To a lesser or greater extent, this is true of each of these models.

<sup>14</sup> Gehring, *House*, 21.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. L. I. Levine, *Ancient Synagogues Revealed* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1981), for synagogues excavated at Masada, Herodium, Gamla, 19-41, and at Capernaum, 52-62; Riesner, 'Synagogues', 184-7; J. F. Strange, H. Shanks, 'Has the House Where Jesus Stayed in Capernaum Been Found?', *BAR* 8 (1982): 26-37, citing 29-30.

synagogue locations in Galilee.<sup>16</sup> This means that Jesus and his disciples would have been accustomed to meeting and worshipping in private homes.<sup>17</sup>

#### 10.1.2.1 *The Οἶκος as a Missional Base for Jesus' Ministry*

Simon Peter's house in Capernaum (τὴν οἰκίαν Σίμωνος) is mentioned multiple times in the Gospels.<sup>18</sup> Careful studies have been done on Capernaum, concluding that this is indeed a historical reference within the Gospel texts.<sup>19</sup> This is underscored not just by exegetical evidence, but also by archaeological evidence, which shows that this actual house has likely been found and excavated.<sup>20</sup> All four Gospels agree that Capernaum was Jesus' preferred residence during his public ministry, and their stories cycle regularly through there.<sup>21</sup>

Gehring proposes that Peter's house became a place of assembly, instruction, and healing in the Jesus movement,<sup>22</sup> and that Jesus made his home in Capernaum, and made it a base for much of his missional outreach, particularly in the 'evangelical triangle' of

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<sup>16</sup> Mt 4.23/Mk 1.39; Mt 9.35; Lk 4.14-15. It is likely that they were even in small Jewish villages in this area. Luke uses συναγωγή 15 times in his Gospel: Lk 4.15 (Galilee); 4.16,20,28 (Nazareth); 4.33,38 (Capernaum); 4.44 (Judea); 6.6; 7.5; 8.41 (Capernaum); 11.43; 12.11; 13.10; 20.46; 21.12.

<sup>17</sup> Gehring, *House*, 29. In light of the central economic and social significance of the οἶκος in the ancient world, this should come as no surprise.

<sup>18</sup> Mk 1.29,33; 2.1; 3.20; 9.33. See also Mt 9.27 (& v.1); 17.24-27. Mk 2.1 (εἰσῆλθε πάλιν εἰς Καπερναοῦμ) and 3.20 (ἔρχεται εἰς οἶκον) refer to Jesus 'coming home' to Peter's house in Capernaum.

<sup>19</sup> It is embedded in the texts in at least seven places, in three different streams of tradition: the sayings source Q (Mt 8.5-13/Lk 7.1-10; Mt 11.20-24/Lk 10.13-15); the Gospel of Mark (Mk 1.12; 2.1); and the pre-Johannine tradition (Jn 2.12; 4.46; 6.17).

<sup>20</sup> See Gehring, *House*, 32-35 for a summary of this debate. V. C. Corbo (a leader of the excavations in Capernaum), 'The Church of the House of St. Peter at Capernaum', *Ancient Churches Revealed*, Y. Tsafir, ed. (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993): 71-76: 'The Synoptic Gospels often mention the House of Simon-Peter at Capernaum, where Jesus often stayed during his public career. After the resurrection, the Jewish-Christian community at Capernaum began using the house as a meeting place... This Christian meetinghouse, within the more spacious house of Simon-Peter, was brought to light during our first and second seasons of excavation...', 71; S. Loffreda (the other leader of the excavation), *Recovering Capharnaum*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Jerusalem: Franciscan, 1993). J. E. Taylor, 'Capernaum and Its "Jewish-Christians"', *Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society* 9 (1989-90): 7-28, has contested this view: 'It seems very unlikely that Jewish-Christians venerated a room or house that was the genuine site of Simon Peter's dwelling... If Jewish-Christians did live in Capernaum after the 1<sup>st</sup> century, they have left no trace.' Loffreda has refuted Taylor in 'La tradizionale casa di Simon Pietro a Cafarnaon a 25 anni dalla sua scoperta', *Early Christianity in Context: Monuments and Documents*, F. Manns, E. Alliata eds. (Jerusalem: Franciscan, 1993): 37-67.

<sup>21</sup> Lk 4.31; 7.1; 10.15; Mk 1.2,21,29; 2.1,15; 3.20,31-32; 9.28,33; Mt 4.13; 11.23; Jn 2.12; 6.17-59. See esp. Lk 10.15/Mt 11.23.

<sup>22</sup> See Mk 1.29-31; 2.1; Mt 9.1,27-31 for examples of healing. See Mk 9.33; Mt 17.24-27 for instruction.

Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida.<sup>23</sup> This would indicate that between his various itinerant missionary trips Jesus was also a sedentary teacher, and Peter's offer of hospitality as a householder was therefore essential to Jesus' ministry. D. L. Dungan observes that even before Easter, 'some sort of already-formed community with Jesus at its head' existed.<sup>24</sup>

This pattern of basing community and mission around a household was likely repeated elsewhere by Jesus and his followers, such as in the region of the Gerasenes/Decapolis,<sup>25</sup> Tyre and Sidon,<sup>26</sup> Gennesaret (Lk 5.1; Mk 6.53), and Caesarea Philippi (Mk 8.27). There is a similar pattern with the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus in Bethany on the Mount of Olives (Lk 10.38).<sup>27</sup> This household served as Jesus' base for forays into Jerusalem, yet was far enough away for Jesus to avoid his enemies there.<sup>28</sup> These households likely formed a network of small communities of people committed to Jesus and his message of the coming kingdom of God. Horsley understands these 'local communities' as a missing link of sorts between Jesus' ministry and the more developed post-Easter Christian churches.<sup>29</sup>

After assessing the evidence, Gehring offers the following conclusion:

Jesus' missional approach [in Capernaum] consisted of finding a house and a household willing to commit themselves to his kingdom message. With this house as a social and material basis, he, along with his newly recruited followers, attempted to reach the entire town of Capernaum and from there the surrounding area within and beyond the 'evangelical triangle' by traveling from house to house and village to village...*Already in the pre-Easter period, the house of Peter served as a kind of prototype of a house church...prayer, fellowship, missional and instructional proclamation were all elements...The house of Peter was a place where the first core group of disciples gathered around Jesus in a house community that can be described as a kind of house church in embryonic form, the 'cradle of the ecclesia in its early formation'.*<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Gehring, *House*, 38-42. Capernaum had a relatively large population at this time, was on an important trade route between Damascus and Caesarea, and was far enough away from larger centers (i.e., Sepphoris, Tiberias, and Jerusalem) that Jesus could avoid directly confronting the political and religious leaders who were there. All of these factors made it an ideal base for Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom.

<sup>24</sup> D. L. Dungan, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Churches of Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971): 57.

<sup>25</sup> Lk 8.26,37; Mk 5.1; 7.31; Mt 4.25; 5.20; 7.31; 8.28.

<sup>26</sup> Lk 6.17; 10.13,14; 12.20; Mk 7.24.

<sup>27</sup> Lk 10.38-39; Mk 11.1,11,12,15,27; Mt 21.17; Jn 11.1,8,18-20. Martha was likely a widow, and the homeowner and head of her household. This explains her role as hostess in Lk 10.38-42.

<sup>28</sup> Gehring, *House*, 43.

<sup>29</sup> G. H. R. Horsley, *Sociology and the Jesus Movement* (New York: Continuum, 1994): 111. This is an assumption, but the idea that the missional practice of Jesus and the disciples directly affected the structure and mission of the early church represents a significant possible connection.

<sup>30</sup> Gehring, *House*, 47. Final quote from Loffreda, 'Tradizionale casa', 38; italics mine.

### 10.1.2.2 Homes in Jesus' Mission Discourses

Jesus not only personally employed this kind of house-to-house, οἶκος outreach, but he also trained his disciples to do the same. This instruction can be found in the synoptic Gospels' mission discourses.<sup>31</sup> Many scholars consider Lk 10.1-12 to be the oldest of the mission discourses, and the most reliable pre-Easter tradition.<sup>32</sup> In this discourse, Jesus announces that the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few (Lk 10.2), and sends out his disciples to the harvest in pairs (ἀπέστειλεν αὐτοὺς ἀνὰ δύο, Lk 10.1).<sup>33</sup> There are two distinct stages in the mission: first, the οἶκος (εἰς ἣν δ' ἂν οἰκίαν εἰσέρχησθε, 10.5a), and second, the πόλις (καὶ εἰς ἣν ἂν πόλιν εἰσέρχησθε καὶ δέχωνται ὑμᾶς, 10.8a).

Jesus' instructs his disciples to begin with a house, and the family or household dwelling in it, focused on building rapport and relationship with the head of household (10.5).<sup>34</sup> Once they have been received there, they enter the second stage, spreading from that household, through existing social networks, and also through healing the sick and proclaiming the kingdom (10.9), until the entire town or city has been exposed to the message of the coming kingdom (10.8-9).<sup>35</sup> Jesus' instruction to his disciples mirrors his own missional approach, as seen in Capernaum and the 'evangelical triangle'.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Lk 9.1-6,10; 10.1-20; Mt 10.1-40; Mk 6.7-13. Also, cf. 1 Cor 9, esp. 1 Cor 9.14 and Lk 10.7. Paul is likely referring to a Jesus saying here, which indicates that a mission discourse tradition must have existed by the time he wrote 1 Cor (ca. early 55). See B. Fjärstedt, *Synoptic Tradition in 1 Corinthians: Themes and Clusters of Theme Words in 1 Corinthians 1-4 and 9* (Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, Teologiska Institutionen, 1974): 65-77, who sees, 'a nice cluster of theme words that we find in both Paul [1 Cor 9] and Luke [ch. 10]', 77, see charts on 74 and 76. C. M. Tuckett, 'Paul and the Synoptic Mission Discourse?', *Ephemerides theologicae Iovaniense* 60 (1984): 376-81, disagrees with this conclusion.

<sup>32</sup> See the summary in *Gehring, House*, 48-53. Scholars are fairly confident that the instructions regarding equipment, house, and town originate with Jesus and were given to his disciples before Easter.

<sup>33</sup> According to OT witness regulations, in which two or more witnesses authenticated the message; Deut 17.6; 19.5; Num 35.30; also Mt 18.16; 26.59-60; Jn 8.17; 2 Cor 13.1; 1 Tim 5.19; Heb 10.28.

<sup>34</sup> This first stage, house-to-house mission, is person-to-person evangelistic outreach, with a focus on the household οἶκος as a pre-existing social network and pattern of relational attachments.

<sup>35</sup> This second stage involves citywide outreach, although it is not clear whether this is still primarily person-to-person and house-to-house, or through public open-air outreach, or both. Lk 10.9,17-20 indicates that there was some aspect of public outreach involved, and therefore both forms are most likely. Wider outreach could have been carried out in the streets, in the marketplaces, or in the synagogues.

<sup>36</sup> See above. This is not surprising, as a teacher would likely model instruction to his students before asking them to emulate him. Jesus had already provided an example of his missional approach to follow.

The disciples are to select a house, and give their ‘peace greeting’ to the one they enter (εις ἣν δ’ ἂν οἰκίαν εἰσέρχησθε, πρῶτον λέγετε· εἰρήνη τῷ οἴκῳ τούτῳ, Lk 10.5).<sup>37</sup> According to cultural customs, only the head of household would be able to accept or reject this greeting of peace.<sup>38</sup> If he was receptive, the householder would extend the invitation of hospitality, which indicated an acceptance of the messenger *and* his message, and therefore his identity as a ‘person/son of peace’ (υἱὸς εἰρήνης, 10.6), and the rest of the household would generally follow suit.<sup>39</sup> This practice of seeking a person of peace points towards an intentional habit of ‘householder evangelism’ which Jesus and his disciples practiced.<sup>40</sup>

The house and household (οἶκος) which received the messenger and the message would then become a base for missionary outreach into the surrounding areas, and a micro-community of faith and expectation of the coming kingdom.<sup>41</sup> It would offer Jesus’ disciples shelter, room and board, the material requirements for their survival (they could carry nothing with them, 10.4), a social network to minister within, credibility in the larger community, and perhaps most importantly, a family community and a home (as they had left their own).<sup>42</sup>

### 10.1.2.3 The Significance of Jesus’ Household Ministry

Though these pre-Easter Kingdom-expectant household communities cannot be considered full house churches, for as practicing Jews they still worshipped in their local synagogues, they are for Luke the sociological and theological forerunners to the Christian house churches that develop a few years later in Acts. Luke uses the Jesus traditions discussed here by

<sup>37</sup> ‘Peace be upon you’ was a common greeting, and an all-encompassing, inward and outward extension of peace. It should be seen as a transfer of power, which can return to the greeter if the recipient is not receptive (Lk 10.6). It is an announcement of the arrival of the kingdom of God, and is therefore missional (10.9,11).

<sup>38</sup> As a stranger, a visiting messenger usually would not greet slaves, or the mother or children.

<sup>39</sup> A host would reciprocate the messenger’s valuable offer – material assistance for spiritual assistance.

<sup>40</sup> *Gehring, House*, 59. We also see this approach later in the Pauline mission. In an οἶκος society, it is a logical missional strategy, for rather than gaining one follower, a householder’s conversion results in their entire household following. It is an efficient way of reaching out to an unfamiliar social network.

<sup>41</sup> In addition to the itinerant ministry of Jesus and his disciples, this points to a sedentary lifestyle and ministry, as Christ-followers established faith communities in the towns they visited, which provided the means to continue the ongoing outreach. This challenges the traditional idea of their exclusive practice of ‘shotgun’ ministry, coming and going too quickly to establish solid faith communities. *Gehring, House*, 61.

<sup>42</sup> They had renounced their own home, family, and possessions. See Mk 10.29-30 for Jesus’ promise about houses and family that his followers left for his sake, which is fulfilled here.

intentionally drawing parallels between the way Jesus modeled mission, and the way the early church did mission, particularly in regards to their οἶκος-oriented missional structures.

Luke wants his readers to understand that as the first Christian leaders established the earliest churches after Pentecost, they were not operating from a vacuum.<sup>43</sup> Instead, they were applying the missional structures and practices which Jesus had taught them. In Luke's Gospel Jesus models the missional use of the οἶκος personally (primarily in Capernaum, though probably in other locations as well), trains them in it through his missional teaching (in the Lukan mission discourses), and then gives them vital experience in how to build missional household communities by sending them out to do it (Lk 9.6; 10.1,17-24). Jesus directly commissions and equips his disciples to build the ἐκκλησία κατ' οἶκον.

For Luke, this Christological seal of approval is the ultimate justification of and validation for the missional house church movement that develops throughout Acts. The house church is Jesus' missional structure, personally endorsed by the son of God himself, and readers of Luke-Acts would do well to recognize and heed this.

## ***10.2. The Early Jerusalem Community – Acts 1-7***

### ***10.2.1 House Churches in the Early Jerusalem Community***

According to Acts, Christian house churches developed extremely early in the life of the Jerusalem community, based on Jesus' previous model and teaching.<sup>44</sup>

#### ***10.2.1.1 The House with the Upper Room and Mary's House***

In Jesus' last days with his disciples, he instructs them to wait in Jerusalem until the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1.4-5). After observing his ascension on the Mount of Olives, they obediently return to Jerusalem, and assemble in the 'upper room' (ἀνέβησαν εἰς

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<sup>43</sup> We see this in the way that they naturally gathered in homes before Pentecost (1.12-15). They had been trained to function this way, and it was a natural choice for them.

<sup>44</sup> For more on Jerusalem at this time, and its influence on Paul's later missionary work, see S. E. Johnson, *Paul the Apostle and His Cities*, Good News Studies 21 (Wilmington: Glazier, 1987): 35-8.



τὸ ὑπερῶνον οὗ ἦσαν καταμένοντες, 1.13) of the house where they are staying (1.12-14).<sup>45</sup> This first reference to a house in Acts is presented as a prototype of early Christian worship: these Christ-followers experience community with one another there (1.12-13), pray together (1.14), meet there at Pentecost (2.1,2), and later probably use it for worship services (2.46; 5.42; 8.3; 12.17).<sup>46</sup> This is the location of the earliest Christian house church, and the base for the community's fellowship, mission, and emerging collective identity.<sup>47</sup>

There is a second Jerusalem house church mentioned in Acts, the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark (τὴν οἰκίαν Μαρίας, 12.12).<sup>48</sup> After being released from prison (12.7-11), Peter goes to this house to find Christians assembled there in prayer,<sup>49</sup> and asks them to 'report these things to James and the brothers there' (ἀπαγγεῖλατε Ἰακώβῳ καὶ τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ταῦτα, 12.17).<sup>50</sup> The place that Peter refers to is likely the house with the upper room from Acts 1, which is evidence of two separate Jerusalem house churches: one gathering around James, and one meeting in Mary's house. This data from 12.17, along with ἰκανοί (12.12),<sup>51</sup>

<sup>45</sup> The upper room was common in Palestinian houses, Mk 14.15; Lk 22.12; Acts 9.37,39; 20.8. It was a place for relaxation, rather than everyday household activities, with a possible capacity of 120 people, though not many more. See B. B. Blue, 'Acts and the House Church', *Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, D. W. J. Gill, C. H. Gempf, eds., AIFCS 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994):140-144, 198-204; Y. Hirschfeld, *The Palestinian Dwelling in the Roman-Byzantine Period* (Jerusalem: Franciscan, 1995): 21-107, for examples of Palestinian houses from this period, including 'the simple house', 24-44, 'the complex house', 44-57, 'the courtyard house', 57-97, 'houses with shops', 98-99, with descriptions and floor plans. See also N. Avigad, 'How the Wealthy Lived in Herodian Jerusalem', *BAR* 2 (1976): 22-35, and *Discovering Jerusalem* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983): 83-137; J. Murphy-O'Connor, 'The Cenacle – Topographical Setting for Acts 2.44-45', *Acts in Its Palestinian Setting*, R. Bauckham, ed., AIFCS 4 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995): 318-21.

<sup>46</sup> They also likely gather there for the breaking of bread and for teaching and preaching, *Gehring, House*, 66. The name of the owner of this house with the upper room is unknown; he or she was likely quite wealthy, because of the size and location of the house, which was probably on the southwest hill of Jerusalem, a rich part of the city. Some have speculated that it was Joseph of Arimathea, a council member (Mt 27.57; Mk 15.43; Lk 23.51; Jn 19.38), or Joanna, the wife of Chuza, one of Herod's administrators (Lk 8.3).

<sup>47</sup> Early Christians did not yet consciously understand themselves as separate from Judaism, but this process of distinctive self-understanding began in this house. Peter presided over this first house church, and when he left Jerusalem, James, the brother of Jesus, became its leader. Cf. Gal 1.18; 2.1,9; Acts 12.17; 15.13-21.

<sup>48</sup> According to Col 4.10, John Mark was cousin to Barnabas, a Levite from Cyprus (Acts 4.36-37), so this family belonged to the Cypriot Diaspora Jews, who had become wealthy, and could afford to purchase property and resettle in Jerusalem. Blue, 'Acts', 136 suggests that a house church met in this house from an early date.

<sup>49</sup> Peter expects to find gathered believers in this house, indicating that it is an established house church.

<sup>50</sup> This refers to a separate church meeting place, simultaneous to the household gathering in Mary's house.

<sup>51</sup> 'Many', ἰκανοί, not all of the believers were gathered there, implying there were others gathered elsewhere.

suggests that 'James and the brethren associated with him met in a different place from Peter's company – that they belonged, to use Pauline language, to a different house-church.'<sup>52</sup>

#### 10.2.1.2 Multiple House Churches in Jerusalem

The early summary passages refer to multiple homes and their role in the early church:

'Breaking bread *from house to house*' (κλῶντές τε κατ' οἶκον ἄρτον, 2.46), and 'every day, in the temple and *from house to house*' (ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ καὶ κατ' οἶκον, 5.42). This strengthens the thesis that the earliest Christians organized themselves primarily in homes, first in the house with the upper room, and later in multiple other private residences throughout Jerusalem.

The church expanded quickly after Pentecost: 'about three thousand souls were added' (2.41);<sup>53</sup> 'the Lord was adding to their number day by day' (2.47); 'the number...came to be about five thousand' (4.4); 'multitudes...were constantly added' (5.14); 'the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly' (6.7). According to Acts 2.46, these new converts began meeting in homes, κατ' οἶκον,<sup>54</sup> which would require a plurality of house churches.<sup>55</sup>

That they gather immediately in house churches is further substantiated by three factors.<sup>56</sup> First, in Acts 8.3 Saul forcefully enters multiple different houses in Jerusalem to arrest them (Σαῦλος δὲ ἐλυμαίνετο τὴν ἐκκλησίαν κατὰ τοὺς οἴκους εἰσπορευόμενος), which points towards the existence of many house churches before his conversion (in 32/34 C.E.).<sup>57</sup> Second, Acts 6.1-6 is evidence that a large number of Greek-speaking Jews (Ἑλληνιστῶν, 6.1)

<sup>52</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Men and Movements in the Primitive Church* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1979): 88.

<sup>53</sup> Though some are skeptical of these numbers, e.g., J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., F. H., C. H. Cave, trans. (London: SCM, 1969): 96-8; Pervo, *Acts*, 86-87; Roloff, *Apostel.*, 63, scholars have demonstrated that they are plausible, cf. W. Reinhardt, 'The Population Size of Jerusalem and the Numerical Growth of the Jerusalem Church', *Acts in its Palestinian Setting*, R. Bauckham, ed., AIFCS 4 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995): 237-65, citing 263-65; Marshall, *Acts*, 82.

<sup>54</sup> Gehring, *House*, 87, claims that this is a distributive rather than a locational sense; cf. White, *Building God's House*, 155-162. Codex D gives the plural, κατ' οἴκους. Whether one translates this phrase, 'in individual homes', or 'from house to house', multiple houses are implied.

<sup>55</sup> Even if these numbers are not taken literally, the two houses would not have had the capacity to hold any real surge in numbers. Luke admits that his numbers are not strictly precise, cf. ὡσεὶ, 1.15; 2.41; 4.4 (ὡς); 19.7. If most of the converts joined a house church, and they had a size of 20-30 members, this would have created approx. 100-150 house churches, which would have had quite an effect on the social culture of Jerusalem.

<sup>56</sup> Gehring, *House*, 88.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Paul's account of this: 1 Cor 15.9; Gal 1.13,23; Phil 3.6. These multiple houses could have been the private homes of Christians, but it is likely that many of them were also the hosts of local house churches.

converted in the first few years, and likely started Greek-speaking house churches. Third, other sources show that this was a time of rapid growth for the Jerusalem synagogue house communities.<sup>58</sup> Early Christian converts in Jerusalem mostly came from this Jewish

background, and would have emulated this synagogue-style organization in their churches.<sup>59</sup>

This shows that a whole series of house churches were established throughout Jerusalem after Pentecost, in addition to the house churches in the upper room and Mary's house.<sup>60</sup>

### 10.2.2 Life in the Jerusalem House Churches

Acts 2.42-47 describes the substance of these early house gatherings.<sup>61</sup>

#### 10.2.2.1 The Devotion of the Early Christians

Προσκατεροῦντες is the central word in Acts 2.42: 'to persist obstinately in...adhere firmly to...be faithful to... remain in attendance...devote oneself to.'<sup>62</sup> In the context of local house churches, the Jerusalem community devoted themselves in this diligent way to four things:

1) Τῇ διδαχῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων. This means that the early Christians listened to the apostles when they taught, and practiced what they heard from them.<sup>63</sup> The apostles' teaching likely

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<sup>58</sup> Rabbinical sources claim that Jerusalem had 480 (*y. Meg.* 73d), 460 (*y. Ketub.* 35c), or 394 (*b. Ketub.* 105a) synagogues; *Gehring, House*, 89. Even if these are exaggerated, the numbers were still quite large.

<sup>59</sup> Jewish-Christian converts who had offered their houses for synagogue use would have probably done the same for early house church meetings, becoming patrons and patronesses. Mary, the mother of John Mark, may be an example of this (Acts 12.12).

<sup>60</sup> Acts also mentions early Christian gatherings in the temple courts (2.46; 3.1-11; 4.1; 5.12,20-25,42), using Solomon's Porch as a public gathering place (3.11; 5.12). This reminds us that in their own self-understanding Christians were still a sect within Judaism in the early days. Luke uses the word *αἵρεσις* to describe the Christians (Acts 24.5; 28.22), which is a Jewish separatist group, which combines old and new religious elements; Filson, 'Significance', 109, 112.

<sup>61</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, 1.166: 'Luke gives an idealized picture of the earliest church – idealized but not for that reason misleading. That it is not misleading appears at once if negatives are inserted [in 2.42]: they ignored the teaching of the apostles, neglected the fellowship, never met to take a meal together, and did not say their prayers. This would be nonsense. The idealizing is in the participle *προσκατεροῦντες* ('continuing faithfully', 'remaining constant'), and that Luke did not intend it to be understood as unmarked by exceptions is shown by his story of Ananias and Sapphira (5.1-11). There is no ground for doubting the outline of Luke's account; if he had not given it we should doubtless have conjectured something of the kind.' For another exception to the community of goods, see the Hellenistic widows, 6.1-3.

<sup>62</sup> Liddell & Scott, *Lexicon*, 1515. It denotes a devotion which is faithful and holistic. *Προσκατεροῦντες* occurs five other times in Acts: joining together constantly in prayer (1.14), continuing to meet together (2.46), giving attention to prayer and the ministry of the word (6.4), following Philip (8.13), and being a personal attendant (10.7). Paul uses it to speak about devoting oneself to prayer (Rom 12.12; Col 4.2), and about rulers devoted to being servants of God (Rom 13.6).

<sup>63</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, 1.163. Cf. 5.28; 13.12; 17.19, all instances of public preaching, while here it is internal teaching.

carried on the teachings of Jesus, and gave direction to the fledgling Christian community.<sup>64</sup>

It also probably contained early forms of a Christian confessional tradition, and

Christological interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures (LXX), with an emphasis on their eschatological fulfillment in Christ.<sup>65</sup>

2) Τῇ κοινωνίᾳ. NT κοινωνία has a dual meaning: a participation and contribution or gift, done in the context of close connection and brotherly cohesiveness.<sup>66</sup> There is a charitable element to the κοινωνία, and a better definition than ‘fellowship’ is ‘the sharing in common of something with someone else in community,’ whether that is relationship, food, prayer, possessions, or anything else.<sup>67</sup> In this sense, all of the things that follow in this passage are aspects of the Christians’ κοινωνία.<sup>68</sup> The οἶκος provides the ideal physical and social environment for this kind of close and generous fellowship to develop.

3) Τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου. This is probably not a secret meal, but a combination of a Christian fellowship meal, and an observance of the Lord’s Supper.<sup>69</sup> It must be understood in light of Lk 24:30-35, where the recognition and presence of Jesus is directly associated with the breaking of the bread.<sup>70</sup> According to Luke this fellowship meal was central to early Christian worship, as the unique mark of their community (Lk 22.14-20; Acts 2.42,46;

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<sup>64</sup> Marshall, *Acts*, 83.

<sup>65</sup> Gehring, *House*, 81-82; Goppelt, *Apostolic*, 43-45. We see the way the apostles preached and interpreted the LXX in the evangelistic speeches in Acts, cf. e.g., 2.16-36; 3.22-26. This hints at the content of their internal teaching.

<sup>66</sup> The word doesn’t appear elsewhere in Acts, although its root, κοινός, ‘common’, occurs at 2:44 and 4:32, referring to the community’s practice of holding all things in common. Paul uses κοινωνία 3 times (Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 8:4; 9:13), each referring to the contribution he is collecting for the church at Jerusalem.

<sup>67</sup> Thuc., *History*, 3.10.1 and Plato, *Gorgias*, 507e use κοινωνία in connection with φιλία (friendship) to refer to an association or fellowship. It may also be the best way to translate the Qumran Community Rule’s Hebrew references to their community (1 QS 6.7; 5.1). Barrett, *Acts*, 1.163.

<sup>68</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 160. Cf. J. Calvin’s definition: ‘the mutual association, alms, and other duties of brotherly fellowship’, *The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 1 (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1965): 85.

<sup>69</sup> Weiser, *Apostelgeschichte*, 104, and R. Pesch, *Apostelgeschichte*, 130, advocate both meanings for the breaking of bread; Barrett, *Acts*, 1.165.

<sup>70</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 160. Cf. Mk 14.22-25; 1 Cor 11.18-30. I. H. Marshall, *Last Supper and Lord’s Supper* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1980): 76-140. Cf. Acts 20:7: ‘gathered to break bread on the first day of the week.’

20.7,11).<sup>71</sup> By making this possible, the house churches allowed the early Christians to achieve distinctly Christian worship and fellowship in safety and privacy from the earliest of days, and enabled the emergence of distinctive Christian identity and self-definition, long before the substantial separation between Christian and Jew fully developed.<sup>72</sup>

4) Ταῖς προσευχαῖς. The plural, as opposed to 1:14, ‘they devoted themselves to prayer,’ indicates a specific set of Christian ‘prayers’. These early prayers are probably some combination of a reflection on the Lord’s Prayer (Mt 6.9-13; Lk 11.2-4), excerpts from the Psalter, early Christian psalms and hymns, and prayers of thanksgiving.<sup>73</sup>

These four elements form a summary picture of the inner-life of the early house church communities, and what they valued most. The material and social context of all of these activities is the household (2.46), and they may be elements of a house worship service, possibly even an order of worship.<sup>74</sup> There is no doubt that these practices contribute to the προσηκουροῦντες of the early ἐκκλησία, to the health and vitality of Christian household κοινωλία, and therefore to the success of the early Christian mission.

#### 10.2.2.2 The Community of Goods

One tangible outworking of early Christian κοινωλία was their community of goods, the way that they ‘had everything in common’ (εἶχον ἅπαντα κοινά, 2.44).<sup>75</sup> This was a voluntary and

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<sup>71</sup> G. Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: Dacre, 1978): 16-18. This breaking of bread celebration was ‘totally unique in their world...the notion of a sacramental “communion” is foreign to both Judaism and the Essenes,’ Goppelt, *Apostolic*, 47. Jews fellowshiped around meals, but the Lord’s Supper was different, for it celebrated the redemptive sacrifice of Christ for their sins, which would have been heretical for the Jews. For Luke this practice of the Lord’s Supper distinguished Christians from Jews from the beginning, and required private places of worship where it could be performed. The particular Christian prayers and theological teaching would have undoubtedly provoked controversy amongst the Jews as well.

<sup>72</sup> Gehring, *House*, 85-86. The theological separation was there from the beginning, largely caused by the Christians’ Christology, and it became more and more apparent over time. It is likely that in Luke’s day Christian identity was still being explored, and Christian-Jewish relations were still being worked out.

<sup>73</sup> For the distinctive practice of Christian prayer, found in Jesus’ manner of addressing the Father personally, ‘Abba, Father!’ (Mk 14.36; also Rom 8.15; Gal 4.6 for early Christian application of this practice), and the old prayer form, ‘Marana tha’, μαράνα θά (cf. 1 Cor 16.22 with 11.26; Rev 22.20), see Goppelt, *Apostolic*, 47. Christians would have been forbidden from praying like this in the Jewish community.

<sup>74</sup> Gehring argues that they are the outline of a Christian worship service, *House Church*, 79-86.

<sup>75</sup> Κοινά is a cognate with κοινωλία; they share the same etymological origin and are thus closely related.

mutual system, based on friendship rather than obligation.<sup>76</sup> Sharing in a friendship context was a well-known ideal in Greco-Roman culture, and would have been looked upon favorably by outsiders.<sup>77</sup> The community of goods is further explained in Acts 4.32,34-35, where Luke claims that it was so effective that ‘there was not a needy person among them’ (οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐνδεής τις ὑπήρχεν ἐν αὐτοῖς, 4.34).<sup>78</sup>

There are multiple factors which may have prompted Christians to practice the community of goods:<sup>79</sup> 1) their eschatological beliefs about the impending end of the world;<sup>80</sup> 2) the radical teachings of Jesus about selling all and sharing;<sup>81</sup> 3) an attempt at survival for poor members, who had been cut off from Jewish charities; 4) an intentional missional strategy, which made Christianity more attractive to nonbelievers.<sup>82</sup> Whatever the reason, it is the best example of the extent to which the early church lived in unified *κοινωνία*, and must

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<sup>76</sup> As opposed to a political/economic system, such as communism. Nowhere is there any indication that this was a mandatory or involuntary practice, and we still see early Christians owning private property later in Acts. Cf. Marshall, *Acts*, 84-5. There is a parallel to this practice amongst the Essene community: ‘That they might form a community in Torah and possessions...to form a communal spirit with regard to the Law and to wealth’, 1 QS 1:11f; 5:2. Josephus commented on this Essene practice: ‘These men are despisers of riches...Nor is there any one to be found among them who hath more than another; for it is a law among them, that those who come to them must let what they have be common to the whole order, insomuch that among them all there is no appearance of poverty, or excess of riches, but every one's possessions are intermingled with every other's possessions; and so there is, as it were, one patrimony among all the brethren’, *War*, 2.122. For a discussion of the differences between the Christian form and the Essene form see Witherington, *Acts*, 162.

<sup>77</sup> ‘That friends share all things is one of the most widely quoted maxims in ancient literature’, Barrett, *Acts*, 1.168. Cf. Plato, *Laws*, 5.739: ‘The first and highest form of the state and of the government and of the law is that in which there prevails most widely the ancient saying, that “Friends have all things in common”...Let the citizens at once distribute their land and houses...’; Arist., *Eth. Nic.*, 9.8: ‘the good man acts for honour's sake, and the more so the better he is, and acts for his friend's sake, and sacrifices his own interest... All the proverbs, too, agree with this...“*what friends have is common property*”, and “*friendship is equality*”...’; Euripides, *Andromache*, 376: ‘friends, if they be really friends, keep nothing to themselves, but have all in common’; Cicero, *De Officiis*, 1.16.51: ‘the common right to all things that Nature has produced for the common use of man is to be maintained...everything else shall be regarded in the light indicated by the Greek proverb: “*Amongst friends all things in common.*”’ Cf. Mealand, ‘Community of Goods’, 96-99.

<sup>78</sup> Luke then gives a positive (Barnabas, 4.36-37) and a negative example (Ananias and Sapphira, 5.1-11).

<sup>79</sup> Luke gives no reason. Barrett, *Acts*, 1.168, contains a more thorough treatment of this question.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Thompson, ‘The Gentile Mission’, 18-27.

<sup>81</sup> Such as Mt 6.19-21: ‘Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth...store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.’ Cf. the discussion in ch. 7 on Jesus’ intensification of discipleship demands.

<sup>82</sup> The *κοινωνία* of the early church, expressed in this habit of sharing their possessions and thus nearly eliminating poverty from their midst, must have been attractive to outsiders, and at least piqued their curiosity, which would have led to evangelistic conversations and other more direct forms of person to person mission. This is esp. true because this generous way of living was a well-known, though rarely obtained, ideal of Greco-Roman lifestyle. It is a fulfillment of Jesus’ promise in Jn 13.35, where he explicitly links community-based love for one another and mission. This is a common theme in the NT: Jn 15.12,17; Rom 12.10-15; 13.8; Gal 5.13,14; Eph 4.1-6; 1 Thes 3.12; 4.9-10; 5.13; 2 Thes 1.3; 1 Pet 1.22; 4.8; 1 Jn 3.10,11,23; 4.7-12; 2 Jn 1.5.

have had quite an impact on those outside the community. The house church was the ideal structure from which to display these attractive qualities.

### *10.2.3 Mission in the Early Jerusalem House Churches*

In the third chapter three primary dimensions of missional outreach were identified: public proclamation, usually through preaching; person-to-person mission, usually through conversation and relationship; and lifestyle mission, usually through living the Christian life in community in a way that attracts observers' curiosity. Each of these forms of mission can be identified in Acts' account of the early Jerusalem church.

#### *10.2.3.1 Public Proclamation*

In Acts, Christians often preach publicly and boldly in Jerusalem.<sup>83</sup> Paul preaches at Pentecost (ch. 2), and at Solomon's porch in the temple (ch. 3), Peter and John proclaim publicly after being miraculously released from prison (ch. 5), and Stephen preaches to the Sanhedrin (ch. 7). This focus on gospel proclamation is captured in the prayer for evangelistic boldness (*παρρησίας πάσης λαλεῖν τὸν λόγον σου*, Acts 4.29), after Peter and John are threatened with punishment if they continue to preach.<sup>84</sup> 5.42 reports that they preached (*εὐαγγελιζόμενοι*) every day (*πᾶσάν τε ἡμέραν*), both in the temple and house to house.<sup>85</sup> Luke wants the reader to understand that frequent public proclamation was a primary factor in the rapid expansion of the church in Jerusalem.

#### *10.2.3.2 Person-to-Person Mission*

Acts does not indicate that every Christian regularly engaged in this kind of public witness, but this does not mean the others were not involved in the mission. Most Christians possessed a similar missional attitude, but the manifestation of this varied.<sup>86</sup> The early

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<sup>83</sup> Acts 2.1-41; 3.1-10,11-13 are all about Peter and John, son of Zebedee.

<sup>84</sup> Note the specific request, that God would help them to continue to speak His word with boldness and confidence. This was a turning point – in the face of danger, they refused to back down from bold proclamation.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. also, the many missional words we have identified for 'preach/proclaim' in ch. 3, which demonstrate how prevalent this practice was in Luke's account of the early church.

<sup>86</sup> *Gehring, House*, 91.

apostles functioned as ‘professional missionaries’, and did most of the public preaching. But this alone cannot explain the rapid growth of the early church, which points to a grassroots evangelistic movement fueled by the missional empowerment of the rank and file.<sup>87</sup> Green highlights this early Christian emphasis on every believer functioning as a missionary:

One of the most striking features in evangelism in the early days was the people who engaged in it. Communicating the faith was not regarded as the preserve of the very zealous or of the officially designated evangelist. Evangelism was the prerogative and the duty of every Church member. We have seen apostles and wondering prophets, nobles and paupers, intellectuals and fishermen all taking part enthusiastically in this the primary task committed by Christ to his Church. The ordinary people of the Church saw it as their job: Christianity was supremely a lay movement, spread by informal missionaries... The spontaneous outreach of the total Christian community gave immense impetus to the movement from the very outset.<sup>88</sup>

In Acts, when persecution breaks out in Jerusalem after Stephen’s martyrdom, Luke states that ‘they were all scattered...*except the apostles* (πλὴν τῶν ἀποστόλων)...those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went’ (οἱ μὲν οὖν διασπαρέντες διῆλθον εὐαγγελιζόμενοι τὸν λόγον, 8.1,4). These are specifically not the ‘elite evangelists’, they are running for their lives, and yet everywhere they go, they share the gospel. Philip is one of these, and his interaction with the Ethiopian Eunuch is surely one of the clearest examples in Acts of relational, person to person mission (8.26-39).<sup>89</sup> Luke is emphasizing that evangelism was not something that early believers felt obligated to do, but it came out of them naturally, even under great pressure.<sup>90</sup> To underscore this point, Luke later emphasizes that, ‘those who were scattered because of the persecution...made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, *speaking the word* (λαλοῦντες τὸν λόγον)...there were some of them...who came to Antioch and began *speaking* (ἐλάλουν) *to the Greeks also*’ (11.19-20).

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<sup>87</sup> In addition to public preaching, the early apostles and leaders were also certainly involved in training the believers to live missional lifestyles.

<sup>88</sup> Green, *Evangelism*, 274.

<sup>89</sup> ‘If public proclamation of various types and the private use of the home were crucial factors in the spread of the gospel, no less important was personal evangelism, as one individual shared his faith with another...One of the most striking examples in the New Testament is that of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch’, Green, *Evangelism*, 223-34. Philip shares in Samaria, with the Ethiopian eunuch, and ‘traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea’ (8.40). Philip relationally shares with people everywhere.

<sup>90</sup> Luke is saying that mission was a core value for the average believer, and not just a belief system.



These are nameless, average believers, carrying out the mission by ‘speaking’ (λαλέω, twice) the word of Christ to others.<sup>91</sup>

The socio-historical οἶκος model also reveals something of this grassroots missional dynamic in the church. The ancient οἶκος provided a social network which was conducive to evangelistic relationships and person to person mission, along with the ideal structure in which to organize and disciple new converts.<sup>92</sup> The conversion of Cornelius’ household is an example of this kind of private, οἶκος-based relational outreach (Acts 10.23-48).<sup>93</sup> Acts indicates that the rapid growth of the church owed as much to the grassroots person to person missional efforts of ‘rank and file’ Christians in their businesses, homes and social networks as it did to the public preaching of the apostolic ‘professional missionaries’.

#### *10.2.3.3 Lifestyle Mission*

The οἶκος groups offered their members many benefits, such as a personal, family-like setting, the opportunity to develop mutually beneficial relationships, and practical support and encouragement (even in material concerns).<sup>94</sup> Thus early Christians became ‘one in heart and soul’ (καρδία καὶ ψυχὴ μία, 4.32), and the οἶκος fellowships had a significant inward impact, in areas such as unity, discipleship, personal growth and pastoral care.

But their fellowship also had an outward impact on those around them: ‘The way... Christians lived in community with one another in spite of their social differences, the fact that they made the needs of one the concern of all...all of this generated a power that flowed

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<sup>91</sup> Green says of these unnamed believers that, ‘they were evangelists, just as much as any apostle was... They were scattered from their base in Jerusalem and they went everywhere spreading the good news which had brought joy, release and a new life to themselves. This must often have been not formal preaching, but the informal chattering to friends and chance acquaintances, in homes and wine shops, on walks, and around market stalls. They went everywhere gossiping the gospel...naturally, enthusiastically, and with the conviction of those who are not paid to say that sort of thing’, *Evangelism*, 173.

<sup>92</sup> Householders would share with householders, slaves with slaves, etc. A dinner invitation would provide an avenue for relational evangelism, as a form of house to house evangelism. *Gehring, House*, 92.

<sup>93</sup> Though this instance of private household evangelism occurred in Caesarea, it surely happened in Jerusalem as well. We see a snapshot of this kind of ministry in Aquila and Priscilla, who likely owned a home which also housed their tent-making shop, and used it as a base for sharing the gospel in their networks in Corinth (Acts 18.1-4). Luke rarely records the details of mission behind closed doors, leaving us to read between the lines.

<sup>94</sup> *Gehring, House*, 93.

out from their community, requiring and producing a response...these (house) groups were compellingly attractive, drawing others into their midst.’<sup>95</sup> This is made explicit in Acts 2.46-47, which describes the vibrant house communities of the early church, and speaks of them enjoying the favor of all the people, which results directly in people being added to their numbers day by day (ὁ δὲ Κύριος προσετίθει τοὺς σωζομένους καθ’ ἡμέραν).<sup>96</sup>

Put simply, people are drawn to a loving and healthy community. This vibrant community in Jerusalem was strengthened by its teaching, grounded in Jesus’ teachings about love.<sup>97</sup> The Christians’ community stood in contrast to most other religious experiences around them.<sup>98</sup> The relationally-based οἶκος structure of the house churches empowered early Christians to live out this attractive and missionally effective form of κοινωνία, and is ultimately one of the primary reasons why they grew so rapidly. The way they lived attracted outsiders, and sparked multiple evangelistic contacts and relationships.

#### 10.2.3.4 Every Christian Is a Missionary

Gehring makes the following conclusion: ‘House churches...were a training ground for Christian koinonia fellowship inwardly and a showplace of Christian fellowship outwardly. This missional expansion of the gospel was due not so much to the mission-strategic initiatives of individuals as to the powerful attraction of a Christian community actively practicing koinonia fellowship.’<sup>99</sup> While his point is compelling, he overstates his case. For Luke, early Christian success was due to the potent combination of all three forms of mission:

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<sup>95</sup> W. Vogler, ‘Die Bedeutung der urchristlichen Hausgemeinden für die Ausbreitung des Evangeliums’, *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 11 (1982): 785-794, citing 788-9; trans., *Gehring, House*, 93.

<sup>96</sup> See also 5.12-14, where a similar pattern is implied.

<sup>97</sup> Jesus’ commandments to love God and neighbor (Mk 12.28-34), and to love one’s enemies (Lk 6.27-36/Mt 5.38-48) would have been foundational, *Gehring, House*, 94.

<sup>98</sup> With the possible exception of the Essenes, G. Lohfink, *Jesus and Community: The Social Dimension of Christian Faith*, J. P. Galvin, trans. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984): 149-163, 181-5. Most scholars agree that there was an Essene presence in Jerusalem by this time; see B. J. Capper, ‘Community of Goods of the Jerusalem Church’, *ANRW* 26 (1979): 1730-34, citing 1730. This may have been a motivating factor for the primitive church, which could not afford to live a lifestyle less ethically attractive than its neighbors. Essenes probably did not practice the other forms of mission mentioned above, which explains why they did not grow like the Christians did.

<sup>99</sup> *Gehring, House*, 94.

public proclamation, relational evangelism, and lifestyle mission. To elevate any one above the others in importance is a mistake; Luke is stressing that it is precisely in their blending together that they are most effective.<sup>100</sup> However, the house church structure did empower person to person mission by catering to the *ὄλικος* networks which provided the relationships necessary for evangelism, and did facilitate lifestyle mission by affording the ideal display for the attractiveness of household-based Christian fellowship.<sup>101</sup>

This addresses the two traditional extreme views, that the early church *only* grew through preaching and mass-conversion,<sup>102</sup> and that there was actually *no* public preaching or mass-response in the early church.<sup>103</sup> According to Acts, public proclamation did happen, largely via apostles and other charismatic leaders, but there were many others in the church, mostly anonymous, who preferred to share their faith from person to person in the privacy of their homes and personal social networks, and who chose to display it through living out loving *κοινωνία* with their fellow believers. All of these were vital to the missional expansion of Christianity, and the house church structure directly facilitated both the relational evangelism, through *ὄλικος*-based social networks, and the attractiveness of *κοινωνία*-based lifestyle mission in the early church in Acts.

Luke's point in all of this is that there is an evangelistic niche for every Christian, and the success of the church's mission requires the full evangelistic involvement of every person. The diverse combination of missional styles in Acts is precisely what makes the church's mission so potent and effective. He wants his readers to engage with evangelism, and find what works best for them. For the majority, the house church driven relational and

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<sup>100</sup> In fact, if we take the text of Acts seriously, the one Luke tells us the most about is public proclamation. The others must be inferred from clues within the text.

<sup>101</sup> Public mission proclamation surely could have happened apart from the house church structure. However, it would not have been as effective, for there would have been no communities in which to involve new converts.

<sup>102</sup> M. Hengel, 'Die Ursprünge der christlichen Mission', *NTS* 18 (1971): 15-38, citing 30-31.

<sup>103</sup> Haenchen, *Acts*, 184-89, and Dibelius, *Studies*, 9-10, 124-25, advocate the other extreme, that there were no mass baptisms, among others. For Luke, the truth is in the middle – all are crucial forms of mission.

lifestyle mission will be their preference, carried out in the context of their home fellowships. But Luke's message is that every Christian is meant to be a missionary.<sup>104</sup>

#### *10.2.4 Missional Church Leadership Structures in Jerusalem*

The church in Jerusalem takes the structural form of a network of relationally connected house congregations, devoted to their leaders' teaching and fellowship with one another, all possessing a missional core purpose, and continually growing as more and more people are drawn into the fellowship. This raises the question of how these local fellowships are led.

##### *10.2.4.1 Peter's Leadership*

The earliest church is led by the leadership team of the Twelve, with Matthias taking Judas' place (Acts 1.15-26). Acts 1-2 records the status transformation of the twelve, as they grow from being followers (*μαθητής*) to becoming leaders (*ἀπόστολος*) of the Christian community.<sup>105</sup> The natural leader of the Twelve is Peter.<sup>106</sup> John, the son of Zebedee, is a secondary leader,<sup>107</sup> and together with his brother James, these three form an oversight team for the primitive church.<sup>108</sup> Their community is initially centered around the house with the upper room, as a place of meeting for fellowship, prayer, worship, and teaching (1.13-14).<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> One could say that Luke is advocating 'every member evangelism', in the sense that as a part of a missional community, every Christian has a part to play in the mission. But this would clearly look different for different people, in different situations, and this evangelistic diversity is one of the keys to missional success in Acts.

<sup>105</sup> N. P. Estrada, *From Followers to Leaders: The Apostles in the Ritual of Status Transformation in Acts 1-2*, JSNT.SS 255 (London: T&T Clark, 2004), traces this transformation, using the social-scientific model of rituals of status transformation, and traces each step in the text of Acts 1-2: Separation, Transition (Liminality-Communitas, and Ritual Confrontation), and finally Aggregation. He also proposes new ways of understanding the pericopes of Acts 1.12-14 and 1.15-26. In presenting this leadership transition, Luke solves the leadership crisis created by Judas' betrayal, and launches a 'massive propaganda campaign' to restore the leadership integrity and reputation of the apostolate, 230-237.

<sup>106</sup> Jesus had a close relationship with Peter, and the events surrounding his denial of Jesus (Jn 18.15-18,25-27), and subsequent restoration (Jn 21.15-23), uniquely equip Peter to lead. For examples of his early leadership of the twelve, see Acts 1.15-22; 2.14ff; 4.8ff; 5.3-15,29.

<sup>107</sup> Peter and John are particularly emphasized in the text as a leadership pair: Acts 3.1-11; 4.1-3,6-19; 8.14-25. John is Peter's co-leader and primary support in ministry.

<sup>108</sup> Jesus singles out these three for special training during his ministry: Lk 8.51 (the healing of the synagogue official's daughter); Lk 9.28 (the Transfiguration); Mk 13.3 (private questioning); Mk 14.33 (in Gethsemane).

<sup>109</sup> The owner of this house played a crucial role as patron of the early Christian community. The twelve would not have been able to buy houses after three years of itinerant ministry with Jesus, in which they gave up most, if not all, of their possessions, and after relocating from Galilee, and they were therefore dependent upon the hospitality of others within Jerusalem.

Under Peter's leadership the events involving the Hellenists led by Stephen unfold, and this produces another early leadership team (6.1-6). This event reveals a key to the development of new leaders in the church, for the Twelve instruct the congregation to, 'choose seven *men from among you* (ἄνδρας ἐξ ὑμῶν) *who are respected and known* (μαρτυρουμένους) *to be full of the Spirit and wisdom* (πλήρεις Πνεύματος Ἁγίου καὶ σοφίας, 6.3). These leadership qualifications are significant. The first is that they are 'from among you', in other words, established and well-known members of the community. The second is similar; as has been seen, μαρτυρέω in Acts often refers to people of good reputation, who are respected because a good report is spoken about them (§3.2.1.3). The apostles emphasize that their reputation whilst among the community is crucial. Finally, the apostles are looking for people who are *known* to be full of the Spirit and wisdom.<sup>110</sup> Each of these requirements highlights a central issue: relational respect, reputation, and longevity within the community. This episode illustrates the early church's organic relational leadership development.<sup>111</sup>

Some of the seven δίακονοι may have gained the experience needed to carry out this new position through being householders and/or leaders and teachers in the Jerusalem house churches.<sup>112</sup> Their roles as Jewish housefathers, or Greco-Roman *pater familias*, would have effectively prepared them for house church leadership.<sup>113</sup> For this reason, in general, 'the church in the house came with its leadership so to speak "built in"',<sup>114</sup> as converted householders naturally became house church leaders. The house churches in turn likely served as the training grounds for the emerging leaders of the city wide and regional church.

<sup>110</sup> Being full of the Spirit is a theme in Acts (2.4; 4.8,31; 6.5; 7.55; 9.17; 11.24; 13.9,52), and being full of wisdom echoes one of the attributes assigned to the development of Jesus (Lk 2.40,52). Parsons, *Acts*, 84.

<sup>111</sup> This habit is affirmed when the Seven are solemnly set apart by prayer and the laying on of hands (6.5-6).

<sup>112</sup> Gehring, *House*, 97. Cf. also, Goppelt, *Apostolic*, 51, 53.

<sup>113</sup> They had responsibility and protective duties over their household, were wealthy enough to own or rent their own home, were well equipped for administrative tasks as the financial managers of their homes, were generally well educated, had experience in teaching their own households, and were natural leaders in local community affairs, as patrons who possessed a certain social honor and privilege. Gehring, *House*, 194-195.

<sup>114</sup> R. A. Campbell, *The Elders: Seniority within Earliest Christianity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994): 126. This would prove to be of immense importance in the emerging leadership structures of the Pauline churches.

By developing their leadership skills, leading successful house churches, growing in character and maturity, learning theology and doctrine, and proving themselves to be capable leaders in the house church environment, they became ideal candidates for positions of oversight within the wider church.<sup>115</sup>

#### 10.2.4.2 James' Leadership

In Acts 12.2,3 James, the brother of John, is killed by Herod Agrippa I, who then goes on to arrest Peter. Despite his miraculous escape from prison, Peter decides to leave Jerusalem (12.7; 41/42 C.E.).<sup>116</sup> Major changes in the church follow, with two distinct groups of leaders emerging to provide leadership and oversight: the apostles and the elders (*ἀποστόλους καὶ πρεσβυτέρους*, 15.2,4,6,22).<sup>117</sup> James, the brother of Jesus, becomes the head of the elders (12.17; 15.13; 21.18), and the church begins to organize itself in a more structured way. From this time on, James and a council of elders oversee the congregation,<sup>118</sup> and this proves to be a stable presbyterial organization until at least 62 CE, when James is martyred.<sup>119</sup>

Where do these 'elders' (*πρεσβύτερος*, and later *ἐπίσκοπος*) come from?<sup>120</sup> The words most likely begin as informal terms of honor, possibly linked to the status of householders or

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<sup>115</sup> *Gehring, House*, 97-98. The emerging church leaders also could have proved their trustworthiness in other ways, such as business, the marketplace, the synagogue or temple, or as a teacher in someone else's home.

<sup>116</sup> Peter was likely expecting the same fate as his good friend James.

<sup>117</sup> It seems that the apostles remain as loose overseers of the entire church as it emerges extra-locally, while the elders have specific responsibilities and leadership of the local network of house churches in Jerusalem.

<sup>118</sup> There are five uses of *πρεσβύτερος* in Acts relating to the Jerusalem church, all after Peter has left, and James is leading: 15.2,6,22; 16.4; 21.18. 11.30 also points towards this time. There are two more references in Acts, both to Pauline churches: 14.23; 20.17. Eldership became a model for church leadership under James' leadership. Additionally, *πρεσβύτερος* is used of the Jewish Council of the elders eight times: 4.5,8,23; 6:12; 22.5; 23.14; 24.1; 25.15. The Jewish eldership was likely an influential model for the early Christians.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Josephus, *Ant.*, 20.200. This 20 year stretch of relative stability under James' leadership from 42-62 must have been invaluable, esp. after the turmoil and adjustment of the first few years of the church. It allowed the early community to establish and strengthen itself in the city.

<sup>120</sup> *Ἐπίσκοποι* are not mentioned until later, in Acts 20.28, of the Ephesian elders. Cf. other NT passages: *ἐπίσκοπος*, Phil 1.1; 1 Tim 3.2; 5.17,19; Tit 1.7; *πρεσβύτερος*, Tit 1.5; Jas 5.14; 1 Pet 5.1,5; 2 Jn 1.1; 3 Jn 1.1. Luke seems to use *πρεσβύτερος* and *ἐπίσκοπος* in an interchangeable manner, using both words to refer to the Ephesian elders in the same narrative episode (Paul's goodbye speech, 20.17,28). Similarly, Paul asks Titus to appoint *πρεσβύτεροι* (Tit 1.5), and then calls them *ἐπίσκοποι* two verses later (Tit 1.7).

house church leaders.<sup>121</sup> With time, as the church's increasingly complex structure requires it, they evolve into a more formal leadership position.<sup>122</sup>

#### 10.2.4.3 A Dynamic Leadership Culture

Some general observations about leadership in the Jerusalem church in Acts can be made.

According to Luke, church leadership is always relationally based. Leadership emerges out of community, and influence is earned through trust and proven reliability over time (6.1-6).

Leadership is also fluid and flexible, with only the minimal necessary structure applied.<sup>123</sup>

There should be space for leaders to develop in their own way, largely facilitated by the house church networks. This results in an organic approach to leadership development, in which leaders and overseers emerge from the house churches themselves.<sup>124</sup>

One can presuppose that there is a degree of relational training and mentoring for those being prepared for higher levels of leadership.<sup>125</sup> There is an emphasis on leaders as equippers of the rank and file for ministry,<sup>126</sup> and many non-apostles have significant places of leadership and influence in the early church.<sup>127</sup> Finally, there is a stress on the synergy of

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<sup>121</sup> Gehring, *House*, 104-105.

<sup>122</sup> There is no formal 'office' of elder in Jewish synagogues, as a person who presided over the services of the synagogue. Rather, elders in the ancient world in general, and in the synagogues in particular, were people with honor and seniority, but not necessarily office, rank, or function. This is thus a stronger Christian contribution than many earlier scholars have recognized. Campbell, *Elders*, 44-45, 95, 111-112, 160; A. E. Harvey, 'Elders', *JTS*25 (1974): 318-31; 'we know virtually nothing about the functions and privileges of Christian elders for at least the first century of their existence...we should not any longer cloak our ignorance with a spurious picture of them drawn from a totally supposititious Jewish "eldership"', 332; D. Powell, 'Ordo Presbyterii', *JTS*26 (1975): 290-328, who claims that primitive clergy developed 'with an impressive unanimity and as a massive consensus...a common doctrine emerged', 327-28; Banks, *Paul's Idea*, 147.

<sup>123</sup> Over time the church grew larger and more complex, and the church's leadership structures naturally grew with it. Cf. the progression from *ἀπόστολος* to *πρεσβύτερος* to *ἐπίσκοπος* in Acts.

<sup>124</sup> We can assume this, based on the house church structure. Luke may not spell all of this out in detail partly because it was so obvious to his readers, living only a few decades later. This leaves us to fill in the blanks.

<sup>125</sup> In the context of this work, mentoring means informal relational training, teaching, and instruction. Peter apparently mentors John (3.1-11; 4.1-3,6-19; 8.14-25). Similarly, Barnabas seems to mentor Paul (11.25-26; 13.1-7; note Barnabas' name comes before Paul), Paul mentors many younger leaders, such as Timothy, Silas, and Gaius (15.40-16.3 throughout his journeys), and Priscilla and Aquila mentor Apollos (18.24-26). Although this word does not exist in the text of Acts, the concept is clear, and is probably modeled on Christ's close rabbi/disciple mentoring relationship with his disciples in Luke's Gospel.

<sup>126</sup> E.g., Acts 8.1-4; 11.19-20: the unnamed preachers and missionaries throughout Acts. This paradigm is reflected in Eph 4.11-13: leaders are appointed for 'the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, to build up Christ's body' (τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἔργον διακονίας, εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ).

<sup>127</sup> The Hellenistic seven (6.1-3), particularly Stephen (6.5,8,10,15; 7.55-60), and Philip (8.5-8, healings and miracles are attributed to him); Silas (15.22-40; 16.19,25,29; 17.4.10); Priscilla and Aquila (18.2,18,26);

team leadership and ministry throughout Acts' account of the early church.<sup>128</sup> It is difficult to find any leader alone in Acts, and never for any extended period of time.<sup>129</sup>

Luke wants the reader to understand that all of these characteristics contribute to a fluid and dynamic leadership culture in the church, and are instrumental in its rapid expansion. The church's ability to reproduce high-quality leaders at all levels, and to empower every person in its midst to engage with mission and ministry, are two of the keys to its ultimate success. The house church structure, *ἐκκλησία κατ' οἶκον*, directly influences all of these aspects of the leadership culture and structure of the early church.

For Luke, this is further justification of the house church structure, and a model for his readers to emulate, as they establish and reproduce house churches. He urges that the church of his day should cultivate relational leadership networks and teams, organic local leadership development, intentional leadership mentoring, and a focus on the empowerment of the rank and file. These all happen best in a house church, and result in an effective missional leadership structure with a simple and fluid organization.

### ***10.3 The House Church between Jerusalem and the Pauline Mission – Acts 8-13***

After Stephen's martyrdom (Acts 7), persecution breaks out in Jerusalem and scatters the church throughout the surrounding regions (8.1-4).<sup>130</sup> Ironically, the expulsion from Jerusalem accelerates the spread of Christianity, and brings the fulfillment of Acts 1.8 closer.

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Apollos (18.24-28). Additionally, one must wonder who established and led the churches at Damascus (9.2-22), Antioch (11.19-21; 13.1-3), and Rome (18.2), who the elders appointed in the Pauline churches are (e.g. Ephesus, 20.17-38; also 14.23), who the 'brothers' in Peuteoli (28.13-14) and in Rome (28.15-16) are, and how all of these leaders were trained and mentored. Reading between the lines of the Acts narrative reveals many people outside of the apostles who are placed into positions of effective leadership within the early church.

<sup>128</sup> From the upper room (1.13-14), through Pentecost (2.1,14,41), Peter and John (3.1-31), the choosing of the Seven (6.1-6), the Antioch leadership (13.1-3), and the elder teams (15.2,6,22; 16.4; 21.18), the norm is team. Throughout the missionary journeys, Paul travels with Barnabas, John Mark, Silas, Timothy, Luke, Aquila and Priscilla, Sopater, Aristarchus and Secundus, Gaius, Timothy, Tychicus and Trophimus. All of these ministry teams would create natural leadership training environments.

<sup>129</sup> Philip seems to be alone in Samaria (8.4-40), Peter may be alone (9.32-10.48), and Paul is only rarely on his own (14.11; 17.14-34; 18.21,23). See 17.15 for Paul's obvious discomfort with traveling alone.

<sup>130</sup> Damascus, Caesarea, and Antioch are Hellenist centers, along with Alexandria, and possibly Rome, F. F. Bruce, *Men*, 60. For background on the Hellenists, see Witherington, *Acts*, 240-251; J. Wanke, 'Ἑλληνιστῆς', *Exegetical Dictionary of the NT 1* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990): 436-37; T. W. Martin, 'Hellenists', *ABD 1*,



### 10.3.1 Philip in Samaria

Philip<sup>131</sup> carries the gospel beyond its previous Jewish boundaries to the God-fearers and Samaritans (8.4-13, 26-40).<sup>132</sup> According to Acts, Philip had an itinerant village to village and house to house missional ministry, similar to Jesus' approach (8.5-7, 26-28, 40, 'he traveled about preaching the gospel in all the towns', *διερχόμενος εὐηγγελίζετο τὰς πόλεις πάσας*).<sup>133</sup> He probably set up residence in Caesarea (21.8-9),<sup>134</sup> and then targeted the villages and cities in the surrounding area in a regional missional strategy, healing the sick, casting out demons, demonstrating God's power, and preaching the gospel. Luke records that many believed the message, were baptized (8.12-13), and subsequently received the Holy Spirit (8.15-17). In Acts, these are indications that new house fellowships were begun.<sup>135</sup>

### 10.3.2 Saul at Judas' House in Damascus

Paul goes to Damascus to persecute the church (9.2), which must be another Christian centre (9.1-19).<sup>136</sup> After his conversion, Paul lives in the house of Judas on Straight Street (*ὀκλίᾳ Ἰουδα*, 9.11, 17, 19), is baptized, and receives instruction from Ananias (9.10-19).<sup>137</sup> This points towards a house-based residential training program for new converts.<sup>138</sup> There are hints of a large congregation in Damascus, which likely met in Judas' house, among others.

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D. N. Freedman, ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1992): 135-36. See also T. Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origins* (New York: T&T Clark Intl., 2004).

<sup>131</sup> See F. S. Spencer, *The Portrait of Philip in Acts: A Study of Roles and Relations* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1992).

<sup>132</sup> Gentile Palestinian cities such as Gaza (8.26), Ashdod, and Caesarea (8.40) were pivotal in his mission. It is likely that believers gradually altered their approach to missional outreach in this period, adapting it to the Gentiles by making it freer from the demands and restrictions of the law.

<sup>133</sup> Gehring, *House*, 106. Cf. Lk 8.1; 9.56; 10.38; 13.22; 17.12, for Jesus' village to village ministry.

<sup>134</sup> 21.8-9 reveals that Philip was a homeowner in Caesarea; and a house church likely met in his home, as it was large enough to offer Paul and all of his companions hospitality. Along with Cornelius' house, this may have been a second early house church in Caesarea, Gehring, *House*, 106. Caesarea was a larger urbanized area than any other 'city' the Christians had ministered in, and was a stepping stone towards urban ministry in Antioch, the third largest city in the Empire. See Johnson, *Paul*, 145-50.

<sup>135</sup> There is a pattern in Acts: when people are saved, they join a house church. Philip also encounters the eunuch during this time, who returns to Ethiopia rejoicing (8.39), and possibly started churches there as well.

<sup>136</sup> It is unknown how this church started, possibly through the Hellenists, or via Diaspora Jews who were converted in Jerusalem at Pentecost. It must have been fairly sizeable by this point, to attract Paul's attention. For a concise review of proposed sources for Acts 9.1-19, see Jervell, *Apostel.*, 291, no. 60.

<sup>137</sup> Luke mentions that Saul 'spent several days (*ἡμέρας τινάς*) with the disciples in Damascus', 9.19.

<sup>138</sup> Gehring argues that new converts would have had to live in such a household community at this time, *House Church*, 107. Cf. Rom 1.3-4; 1 Cor 11.23-25; 15.3-5, for what may have been some of the substance of this

### 10.3.3 Peter in Joppa and Caesarea

Peter also employs an itinerant ministry approach (9.32-10.48) which is similar to Jesus' pre-Easter mission discourse (Lk 10.1-12).<sup>139</sup> He 'travels around the whole region' (διερχόμενον διὰ πάντων κατελθεῖν, 9.32), visits Lydda, where he heals Aeneas (9.33-35), and then proceeds to Joppa. Peter's raising of Tabitha from the dead takes place in a personal home in Joppa (9.36-43), in another upper room (ὑπερῶον, 9.37,39).<sup>140</sup> Luke says that this miracle 'became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord. And Peter stayed in Joppa *many days* (ἡμέρας ἱκανὰς) with a tanner named Simon' (9.42-43), implying that this house became a missional hub for that area. Once again, a personal home, and the hospitality offered by a householder (Simon), form a house church which becomes the launching pad for regional missional outreach, this time sparked by a dramatic miracle.

While Peter is staying at Simon's home in Joppa, a God-fearing householder named Cornelius invites Peter into his home (10.22), receives the peace greeting, and gives him shelter (10.23-24). Cornelius' entire household receives the word of God, following their head of household (10.44-48; 11.1). After this, Peter is invited to stay a few days, presumably to establish this new house church through further teaching and discipleship instruction (10.48). This is likely the founding narrative of the Caesarean church, as Cornelius' house becomes a base of operations for the outreach to the city and surrounding

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basic instruction. Though in Gal 1.12,16 Paul claims that he did not receive his message from men, but from God directly. Despite this claim, it is inevitable that those in this Damascus house church would have helped to influence and disciple Paul in these earliest days of his Christian faith. Cf. Acts 22.12-16 for Paul's recounting of Ananias' influence on him, and 9.19.

<sup>139</sup> The difference is that rather than going 'randomly' from house to house, he is instructed by the Spirit, particularly in the case of Cornelius' house. *Gehring, House*, 107.

<sup>140</sup> This is the same word used of the house with the upper room in Acts 1, and also of the house with the upper room in Troas where Paul preaches, and Eutychus falls from the window (20.8).

area,<sup>141</sup> and develops into a significant regional church over the following years (18.22; 21.8,16). This episode shows a house and regional strategy, based around Cornelius' οἶκος.

The centrality and versatility of the οἶκος missional structure can be seen in Philip's itinerant ministry in Samaria, in Saul's conversion and training in Damascus, in Peter's itinerant ministry in the region around Lydda and Joppa, and in the conversion of Cornelius and his household in Caesarea and the house church that is subsequently established there. Luke systematically advocates the missional use of the οἶκος structure in all of these stories.

#### 10.3.4 The Church at Antioch on the Orontes

Some of the persecuted Christians flee Jerusalem and relocate to Antioch,<sup>142</sup> establishing a church there (11.19-21).<sup>143</sup> This church evangelizes not only its own city, but also the surrounding area, and ultimately becomes the launching pad for a worldwide mission.<sup>144</sup>

Luke mentions that those who came 'also began speaking to the Greeks' (Ἑλληνιστάς, or possibly Ἕλληνας, 11.20).<sup>145</sup> It is at Antioch that intentional multicultural church is first attempted, as Gentiles and Jews seek to find fellowship and unity together, and out of this the

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<sup>141</sup> Gehring, *House*, 108. Thus fulfilling the second stage of the missional progression Jesus had laid out to Peter and the other disciples (Lk 10.1-20). The case of Cornelius is a clear parallel with Jesus' mission instructions, and an example of a house/οἶκος mission approach in Caesarea.

<sup>142</sup> Antioch was the third city of the Roman Empire after Rome and Alexandria (Josephus, *War*, 3.29: 'Antioch, which is the metropolis of Syria, and without dispute deserves the place of the third city in the habitable earth that was under the Roman empire, both in magnitude, and other marks of prosperity'), and a strategic city for early Christianity. As the capital of the province of Syria, and a commercial centre with a population of at least half a million, it was the first cosmopolitan city where Christianity established itself. Witherington, *Acts*, 366. For more on Antioch, see G. Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria from Seleucus to the Arab Conquests* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961); R. Tracy, 'Syria', *Acts in its Graeco-Roman Setting*, D. W. J. Gill, C. H. Gempf, eds., AIFCS 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994): 236-39; D. S. Wallace-Hadrill, *Christian Antioch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982): 1-13; Stark, *Cities of God*, 37-38.

<sup>143</sup> These were men from Cyprus and Cyrene. There was a large well-established Jewish community in Antioch by this time. C. H. Kraeling, 'The Jewish Community at Antioch', *JBL* 51 (1932): 136,147, estimates the Jewish population of Antioch at the time of Augustus to be 45,000. Cf. W. A. Meeks, R. L. Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch in the First Four Centuries of the Common Era* (Missoula: Scholars, 1978): 8, who estimate the Jewish population of Antioch to be 'around 22,000', though 'the margin of error in such guesswork is enormous'. They also investigate how many synagogues there were in Antioch.

<sup>144</sup> 'The summary of the establishment of the church in Antioch presents an important new development, both geographically and ethnically. The gospel reaches a major city of the empire and finds a ready response from people of Greek culture, including Gentiles', Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2.146. For more on the history and significance of Antioch, Johnson, *Paul*, 44-56.

<sup>145</sup> The context here implies Greek speaking Gentiles as well as Jews, Witherington, *Acts*, 369.

first Gentile-focused mission is born.<sup>146</sup> Luke emphasizes three times how responsive the city is, and how quickly the church grows (11.21,24,26).<sup>147</sup> The strength and wealth of this church is also highlighted by their contributed to the ‘mother church’ in Jerusalem (11.28-30). Finally, Luke mentions that ‘the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch’ (χρηματίσαι τε πρώτον ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ τοὺς μαθητὰς Χριστιανούς, 11.26).<sup>148</sup> This new name suggests a distinguishable and visible group, presumably because of the many Gentiles involved, and because of the size of the growing community.<sup>149</sup> A group that stood out like this in cosmopolitan Antioch must have had a significant social impact on the city.

#### 10.3.4.1 *The Organization of the Antioch Church*

‘That the church in Antioch met κατ’ οἶκον in the private domestic houses of affluent members as in Jerusalem is probable simply because this was the case for the overwhelming majority of all believers in the early Christian movement for the first three centuries.’<sup>150</sup>

There were likely multiple wealthy homeowners in the early stages of the development of the

<sup>146</sup> See M. Slee, *The Church in Antioch in the First Century CE: Communion and Conflict*, JSNT.SS 244 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2003), for a treatment of the ethnic conflict and resolution between Jews and Gentiles at Antioch. She examines Acts 15, Gal 2.1-14, the Didache and the Gospel of Matthew for models of how this problem of Gentile entry into the church and the related issue of Jewish-Gentile table fellowship were handled. Ultimately, she concludes that though the Antioch church was almost destroyed by these issues, it managed to produce an effective solution which restored unity to the church and ensured its survival.

<sup>147</sup> 11.21: ‘the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number (πολὺς τε ἀριθμὸς) who believed turned to the Lord; 11.24: ‘considerable numbers (ὄχλος ἰκανός) were brought to the Lord’; 11.26: ‘they taught considerable numbers (ὄχλον ἰκανόν).’

<sup>148</sup> Lit., ‘the disciples in Antioch transacted business (χρηματίζω) for the first time [under the name of] Christians’, Bruce, *Acts*, 274. Χριστιανούς means those belonging to, identified with, or following Christ. The term occurs here, in Acts 26.28; 1 Pet 4.16, all from others speaking about Christians, probably initially as a term of contempt and ridicule. Christians did not adopt this name until the second century (Ignatius), instead preferring to call themselves disciples, believers, saints, brothers and sisters, or followers of ‘the Way’. See H. B. Mattingly, ‘The Origin of the Name Christiani’, *JTS* 9 (1958): 26-37, who compares it to the Augustiani, Caesarani, etc.; E. J. Bickerman, ‘The Name of Christians’, *HTR* 42 (1949): 109-24, who does a lexical and grammatical examination of the phrase, concluding that it was a self-designated title meaning ‘agent, or representative of the Messiah’, 123; H. J. Cadbury, ‘Names for Christians and Christianity in Acts’, *The Beginnings of Christianity* 5 (London: MacMillan, 1920-1933): 583-86.

<sup>149</sup> This does not necessarily imply a separate group outside of Judaism, as the Herodians, loyal to Herod the Great and his dynasty (Mk 3.6; 12.13; Mt 22.16) are an example of a distinguishable group within the confines of Judaism. However, the large number of Gentiles involved at Antioch suggests a growing separation.

<sup>150</sup> *Gehring, House*, 109.

Antioch church, who acted as patrons for the emerging house communities.<sup>151</sup> The established leadership team of the church (13.1)<sup>152</sup> indicates that the church had already grown beyond the initial phase of development, where it consisted of merely one or a few house churches, into a citywide organization, with a plurality of local house fellowships.<sup>153</sup>

Acts 13.1-3 is a glimpse into the inner-workings of this missional community, and a turning point in the overall narrative of Acts.<sup>154</sup> Barnabas and Paul have taught and lived with this church for a year (11.25-26),<sup>155</sup> as two of the five ‘prophets and teachers’ (προφήται και διδάσκαλοι) who oversee the church (13.1).<sup>156</sup> This is another leadership team in Acts, overseeing the network of house groups and the emerging extra-local outreach.<sup>157</sup>

#### 10.3.4.2 *The Mission of the Antioch Church*

Luke presents this church as a passionate and dynamic spiritual environment, in which regular fasting (νηστευόντων, twice), prayer (προσευξάμενοι), and ‘ministering to the Lord’ (λειτουργούντων τῷ Κυρίῳ) permeate the community (13.2-3).<sup>158</sup> When the Holy Spirit directs them towards mission (ἀφορίσατε δή μοι, ‘set apart for me now!’),<sup>159</sup> they send out those designated people (‘release them’, ἀπέλυσαν) with more prayer and fasting, and with

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<sup>151</sup> It is likely that all of the men listed in 13.1 were wealthy homeowners of significant social status, and Nicholas the proselyte from Antioch could also be counted (6.5), Theissen, *Social Setting*, 179-180. God-fearers and proselytes tended to be more wealthy, and there were many living in Antioch, Kraeling, ‘Jewish Community’, 147; J. D. G. Dunn, ‘The Incident at Antioch (Gal 2.11-18)’, *JSNT* 18 (1983): 3-75, citing 30.

<sup>152</sup> These may have been outstanding house church leaders, who formed a leadership council for the citywide church (network of house churches) in Antioch, *Gehring, House*, 112.

<sup>153</sup> This is also supported by the fact that others had given them the name ‘Christians’, an indication of a size considerable enough to be noticed and stand out in a cosmopolitan centre.

<sup>154</sup> E. Best, ‘Acts 13.1-3’, *JTS* 11 (1960): 344-48, who argues that this incident, ‘represents the first deliberate and professional missionary activity...the spread of the Gospel can no longer take place haphazardly but is to be a planned activity of the Church, carried out by certain people on behalf of the whole Church...’, 345, 348.

<sup>155</sup> Presumably this was outreach ministry done in the city and region, laying foundations for later mission work.

<sup>156</sup> It is best to understand these five men as both prophets and teachers – Paul is clearly both (11.26; 13.9-11).

<sup>157</sup> Luke implies that the Antioch church is flourishing, and this allows it to extend outreach to other areas. This leadership team includes Simeon called Niger, which is suggestive of an African origin, Johnson, *Acts*, 220.

<sup>158</sup> These leaders are seeking God’s presence and will, and this is fundamental to the resulting mission.

<sup>159</sup> This was probably spoken through a prophet.

the laying on of hands (ἐπιθέντες τὰς χεῖρας).<sup>160</sup> In Antioch, mission emerges directly out of the vibrancy of the believers' connection with God, and with one another.

The commissioned missionaries then embark on their itinerant journey of outreach, and upon completion of their task, return to the church to give a report (14.26-27; cf. Lk 10.17-20).<sup>161</sup> They model their missionary outreach on Jesus' mission instruction tradition for radical itinerants (Lk 10.1-20), traveling in pairs, renouncing the right to marry, to own personal property, and to have a permanent residence, and operating as exorcists and healers.<sup>162</sup> It follows, therefore, that they pursue an intentional household missional strategy, reaching heads of households and their οἶκος relationships to establish hubs for mission, which then develop into city-wide, regional, and eventually extra-regional, οἶκος evangelistic movements, which in time send out their own missionaries, to repeat the process again.<sup>163</sup> In this way, the missional cycle is reproduced many times over, in multiple different areas.

#### *10.3.4.3 The Model for Mission*

These events at Antioch represent a watershed in the missionary endeavors of the early church. Although Gentiles had already been converted (Acts 8,10), this is the first attempt at planned evangelism of Gentiles as well as Jews.<sup>164</sup> It is also the first intentional effort at extra-regional or international mission, and thus a fulfillment of Jesus' promise in Acts 1.8.

Luke presents the Antioch church to his readers as the ultimate model of a missional local church, impacting not just its immediate surroundings, but many other areas as well.

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<sup>160</sup> 'The church that selflessly gave to relieve fasting imposed by famine (11.27-30) now engages in fasting for religious purposes', Parsons, *Acts*, 185. It is likely that there are other itinerant missionaries sent out from this church in addition to Paul and Barnabas, such as Mark, Silas, and others (Acts 15.38-39; 13.1).

<sup>161</sup> *Gehring, House*, 109. This accountability aspect is crucial to the long-term sustainability of the Antioch missional model.

<sup>162</sup> 1 Cor 7.7; Phil 4.11-13; 2 Cor 6.10; 12.27; Acts 5.36-37. Jesus' instructions were modified slightly, for instance, at times they attempted to provide for themselves. Cf. 1 Cor 9.6,12-18 with Mt 10.9-10. For healing and exorcism, see Acts 13 and 14. *Gehring, House*, 110.

<sup>163</sup> This is certainly true of Paul's missionary journeys, see next section, and part 4.

<sup>164</sup> 'Here in Acts 13.1-3 they are commissioned to the full-time and intentional pursuit of the Gentile mission. As such it marks a major division in the story of Acts', Parsons, *Acts*, 185.

### **Table 10.1 The Missional Characteristics of the Church at Antioch**

- A vibrant spiritual environment, in which the people are devoted to God's presence, live a lifestyle characterized by prayer, worship and fasting, and the Holy Spirit speaks clearly (13.2-3; 11.26).
- A strong core leadership team, with primary prophetic and teaching functions (13.1).
- A diverse demographic of people from different ethnic and social backgrounds (11.20; 13.1).
- A group of wealthy patrons and donors to resource the local and extra-local mission (11.30; 13.1; 6.5).
- A broad geographical vision, which takes seriously Jesus' mandate to the ends of the earth, and carries the authority to send missionaries to faraway places (13.3-4; 14.26; 15.40).
- A mission team concept, commissioning missionaries not individually, but in groups (13.3; 14.26; 15.39-40).
- A simple, οἶκος-based missional model for church, which is easily reproduced in different environments and locations (11.26; Paul's missionary journeys).
- A bold evangelistic ethos, which inspires people to expand the church locally, and also to travel great distances to spread the gospel (11.20-21,24,26; Paul's journeys).
- A large and rapidly growing local congregation, possessing the 'strength in numbers' to generate the momentum required to birth a church-planting movement (11.21,24,26).
- A prevailing 'culture' in which the lives and characters of local members exude Christ-likeness (11.26).
- A system of pastoral care and accountability that ensures the missionaries sent out have follow-up and long-term relationships (14.26; 18.22-23).<sup>165</sup>

These characteristics combine to create a sustainable and reproducible church-planting movement, all based around the core structure of the house church. Luke wants his readers to emulate this Antioch church, which shows the full potential of a missional local church.

#### ***10.4 House Churches in the Pauline Mission – Acts 13-21***

The most famous missionaries the Antioch church sends out are Paul and Barnabas.<sup>166</sup>

Everywhere they go, they either start a house church, or support an existing house church.<sup>167</sup>

In Acts 20.20 Luke shows that Paul made the home the hub of his ministry: 'I did not shrink from...teaching you publicly and from house to house (κατ' οἶκους).'<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> On 'accountability' in Acts, see §11.5.4 and §12.6.2.

<sup>166</sup> Because Luke chooses to focus on them; there were surely others sent out from Antioch in similar fashion.

<sup>167</sup> Paul started a local church in nearly every city that he spent any significant time in: Pisidian Antioch (13.48-49), Iconium (13.1-3), Lystra (14.21-21), Derbe (14.21), Philippi (16.13-15,40), Thessalonica (17.4), Berea (17.12), Athens (17.34), Corinth (18.8), Ephesus (19.8-12,17,20). Luke mentions 18 cities in Paul's travel, and in nearly all of these, his visits were for the founding, building up, or encouragement of the mission churches.

<sup>168</sup> The churches' structure was identical to the ones with which Paul was already familiar, house churches.

### **Table 10.2 House Churches in the Pauline Mission in Acts<sup>169</sup>**

- 1) Lydia and her household in Philippi (16.14-15)<sup>170</sup>
- 2) The jailer and his household in Philippi (16.29-34)<sup>171</sup>
- 3) The house of Jason in Thessalonica (17.1-9)<sup>172</sup>
- 4) The house of Aquila in Corinth (18.1-4)
- 5) The house of Titius Justus in Corinth (18.7)<sup>173</sup>
- 6) The house of Crispus in Corinth (18.8)
- 7) The large house in Troas with the upper room (20.7-12)<sup>174</sup>

Luke implies that all of these played a significant role in the missional outreach and city-wide church formation in their city.<sup>175</sup> Each of these is likely a church origin account in Acts, founded upon an existing *oikos*, or house and household.<sup>176</sup>

There are references to at least twelve different Pauline house churches in Acts and Paul's own writings, which confirm that Paul planted house churches.<sup>177</sup> This is no surprise, given how influenced he was by the churches at Antioch and Jerusalem, both of which intentionally practiced this missional structure.

Paul continues the practice of community and mission formation around a core family in private domestic homes, just as has been seen in Jesus' teaching and mission, in the early Jerusalem church, in the work of Philip and Peter, and in the house churches in Antioch.

'Houses served as community centers for the life of the church and as operational bases for missional outreach; as such they were a powerful force for the mission enterprise in all these

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<sup>169</sup> It can be assumed that Sergius Paulus' household was also involved in Paphos (13.6-12), though Luke never explicitly mentions his house. Similarly, Paul must have had a householder's offer of hospitality in every location in which he stayed, including Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, and Perga.

<sup>170</sup> See Hemer, *Acts*, 114.

<sup>171</sup> For Philippi's history and condition in Paul's day, see Johnson, *Paul*, 74-76; H. L. Hendrix, 'Philippi', *ABD* 5, D. N. Freedman, ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1992): 313-17.

<sup>172</sup> On Thessalonica at the time of Paul, see Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 46-47; Hendrix, 'Thessalonica', *ABD* 6, D. N. Freedman, ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1992): 523-27; Johnson, *Paul*, 76-80.

<sup>173</sup> For background on Corinth in Paul's day, see J. Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1990), and 'Corinth', *ABD* 1, D. N. Freedman, ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1992): 1134-40; Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 47-50.

<sup>174</sup> This episode is an example of a weekly worship service, including a communion celebration and preaching.

<sup>175</sup> *Gehring, House*, 128-30. There are significant locations in Acts in which houses are not explicitly mentioned, such as Athens and Ephesus.

<sup>176</sup> For more details on each of these, see *Gehring, House*, 121-55.

<sup>177</sup> There are multiple references to house churches in Paul's writing, including the church that meets in Nympha's house in Laodicea (Col 4.15, a disputed Pauline letter, but certainly a Pauline church), the church in Corinth that meets in Aquila and Priscilla's house (1 Cor 16.19), the church that meets in their house in Rome, approximately three years later (Rom 16.3,5; cf. 14-15,23), and the church that meets in Archippus' home, most likely in Colossae (Phlm. 1-2,21-22). There are multiple other indirect references, particularly to Corinth (1 Cor.), and to Phoebe in Cenchreae (Rom 16.1-2).



places.<sup>178</sup> The local house church's flexibility was ideally suited to the constantly morphing Christian movement as it spread across the Empire.

### ***10.5 Conclusions – The Importance of the House Church***

According to Luke, the basic structure for Christian mission is the local church, and more particularly, the house church. This is largely because the Greco-Roman world was fundamentally an *oikos* society; the household was the architectural, social, and economic foundation for life, and therefore the ideal structure for the missional advancement and expansion of the church. The early church leaders capitalized on and maximized the potential of this all-pervasive structure in an intentional and effective way. By building the church within the *oikos*, and focusing on householders in the existing patronage system, they tapped into an already intact social and economic system, which enabled the church to grow naturally and rapidly within existing social and material structures.

In Acts the early Christians adopted the house church as their primary structure for mission, and as a way to 'contain the harvest' as it came in (cf. Lk 10.2; Jn 4.35). This can be observed in at least four stages of the early Christian mission: Jesus introduced this approach in nascent form in his village and regional missional ministry and teaching, the primitive church in Jerusalem developed it in their city-wide outreach, those who fled from Jerusalem adapted it in their urban and regional outreach, particularly at Antioch, and Paul employed it in his worldwide center-oriented missional outreach. The basic structure of the house church had implications for missional strategy and practice, church community and daily life, leadership development and structure, and virtually every other aspect of the life of the early church. It proved to be immensely effective, and Luke presents it as one of the primary reasons for the success of the Christian mission.

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<sup>178</sup> Gehring, *House*, 116.

## **PART 3 CONCLUSION – STRUCTURES THAT FACILITATE**

### **MISSION IN ACTS**

For Luke, the church is a missionary movement by definition. Luke intends to provoke and motivate believers into missional activities and lifestyles throughout the Acts narrative by presenting various stimuli for mission. Though it takes the form of historical narrative, Acts functions more as a rhetorical teaching in this regard, and Luke has multiple theological and ideological motivations in writing it.

If Christ-followers are to be missional, they must employ structures which facilitate this mission and aid in its advance, and another of Luke's aims is to equip his readers in what these missional structures are. Part three has identified the *ἐκκλησία* and the *οἶκος* as the primary missional structures which Luke advocates in Acts, particularly as they combine together in the form of the house church. Luke is instructing his readers to maximize the strategic opportunities presented by living in an *οἶκος* society, with its patronage system of benefaction and householders. For Luke, the house church is the ideal structure with which to do this, and he weaves it into his narrative in a comprehensive way that encourages his readers to build and nurture house churches everywhere they go.

*Ἐκκλησία* was not a new word or concept in the first century Greco-Roman world. Yet the early Christians took this familiar word and infused it with a new world of meaning: the called-out ones, the church. This new eschatological community functioned within the structural framework of the ancient *οἶκος* society, and thus positioned itself for sustained long-term missional success. The house church found its ultimate use in the Pauline mission. It is also in Paul's evangelistic work that the missional strategy of the early church in Acts comes to full development and maturity. This is the subject of part four of this work.

## PART 4 – MISSIONAL STRATEGY IN ACTS

*'While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said,  
"Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."  
So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.'*  
-Acts 13.2-3 (NASB)

*'All who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.'*  
-Acts 19.10 (NASB)

A strategy is a plan of action designed to achieve a certain goal. The overriding goal of the early Christians in Acts is the success of the mission, and the expansion of the church. This part examines how the earliest missionaries achieved this goal in Acts. Although there are missional strategies in earlier portions of the narrative, Paul's missionary journeys (Acts 13-21) represent the high point and culmination of the missional strategy of the church in Acts.

Much depends on the definition of strategy. If by strategy is meant a deliberate, well-formulated, duly executed plan of action based on human observation and experience, then Paul had little or no strategy; but if we take it to mean a flexible *modus operandi* developed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and subject to His direction and control, then Paul did have a strategy.<sup>1</sup>

There are themes and repeated patterns in Paul's missionary journeys, which Luke uses to shed light on Paul's *modus operandi*. Schnabel maintains that, 'Paul planned his missionary initiatives in the context of a general strategy that controlled his tactical decisions.'<sup>2</sup> The following chapters explore Paul's general missionary strategy.

This analysis presupposes that no description of Paul's mission is 'rhetorically innocent'. Luke means to present his main character as a model to be imitated by his readers, and this is his underlying ideological agenda. In Acts, Luke is not merely describing 'what was', from his perspective, but he is also advocating 'what should be' in his day. As repetitive missionary tactics in the Pauline mission are discovered, the missional strategies which Luke is endorsing and encouraging his readers to emulate will be perceived.

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<sup>1</sup> J. H. Kane, *Christian Mission in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976): 73.

<sup>2</sup> Schnabel, *Mission*, 2.1293; for discussion of strategy and tactics in the ancient world, and in the early church's mission, cf. 1.499-517.



## CHAPTER 11 – PAUL’S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY (13.4-14.26)

In Acts Paul travels extensively before his missionary journeys,<sup>1</sup> and also quite a lot afterwards.<sup>2</sup> This travel establishes Paul as a ‘professional traveller’ *par excellence*.<sup>3</sup>

However, the heart of Paul’s missional strategy is found in his missionary journeys.<sup>4</sup>

**Table 11.1 The First Itinerary (13.4-14.26) – 48 CE<sup>5</sup>**

13.1	Syrian Antioch (on the Orontes)	14.6	Lystra, Derbe, and region
13.4	Seleucia	14.8	Lystra
13.5	Salamis, Cyprus (by ship)	14.20	Derbe
13.6	Paphos	14.21	Lystra, Iconium, Pisidian Antioch
13.13	Perga in Pamphylia (by ship)	14.24	Throughout Psidia to Pamphylia
13.14	Pisidian Antioch	14.25	Perga, Attalia
13.51	Iconium	14.26	Syrian Antioch (by ship)

Marshall’s assessment of this first journey should be remembered:

Paul’s missionary work [during] this period [his first journey] has the best claim to being called a ‘missionary journey,’ as is customary on Bible maps. The later periods were much more devoted to extended activity in significant key cities of the ancient world, and we gain a false picture of Paul’s strategy if we think of him as rushing rapidly on missionary *journeys* from one place to the next, leaving small groups of half-taught converts behind him; it was his general policy to remain in one place until he had established the firm foundation of a Christian community, or until he was forced to move by circumstances beyond his control.<sup>6</sup>

### 11.1 Cyprus (13.4-12)

Paul and Barnabas travel first to Cyprus, the home of Barnabas (4.36), which is about sixty miles offshore from Antioch’s port city, Seleucia (13.4).<sup>7</sup> Luke emphasizes that they are ‘sent out by the Holy Spirit’ (ἐκπεμφθέντες ὑπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, 13.4), after saying that

<sup>1</sup> Before his first ‘official’ missionary journey, Luke notes Paul in Jerusalem (8.1; 9.1), Damascus (9.2-3,8), Tarsus (11.25; his birthplace, 9.12; 21.39), Syrian Antioch (11.26), Jerusalem again (11.30), and back in Syrian Antioch (12.25). Between each of these locations a lengthy journey was undertaken, likely by foot.

<sup>2</sup> After his third missionary journey, albeit within the constraints of captivity, Paul travels from Jerusalem to Caesarea (23.33, by horseback), to Sidon (27.3), Myra (27.5), Fair Havens on Crete (27.8), Malta (28.1), Syracuse (28.12), Rhegium and Puteoli (28.13), all by ship, or shipwreck. Then he travels on foot to the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns (28.15), and finally to Rome (28.16).

<sup>3</sup> B. M. Rapske develops this theme in ‘Acts, Travel and Shipwreck’, *Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, D. W. J. Gill, C. H. Gempf, eds., AIFCS 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994): 1-48, citing 3-6.

<sup>4</sup> The chapters in part 4 follow the chronological and geographical outline of Acts in the section headings (11.1, 11.2...), and identify strategic missional themes in these journeys in the sub-headings (11.1.1, 11.1.2...).

<sup>5</sup> Journey dates from Witherington, *Acts*, 83. Paul walked on foot from place to place, unless otherwise specified. These are the actual locations that Luke reports to us in Acts. That there were other destinations not mentioned in Acts along the way is inevitable. For a description of other cities and areas that Paul would have likely visited along his journeys, see Schnabel, *Mission*, 2.1073-1292.

<sup>6</sup> Marshall, *Acts*, 214.

<sup>7</sup> Seleucia was 5 miles from the mouth of the Orontes river. The regional Roman fleet was stationed there, and it was relatively easy to obtain passage to many destinations from this port, Witherington, *Acts*, 394. That they went to Cyprus first may signify that Barnabas was considered the senior missionary partner at this point.

the Holy Spirit had set them aside for the mission (13.2). This underscores that for Luke: the mission is not just initiated by the Holy Spirit, but led at every point by the Spirit as well.

They go to a location where they have existing relationship, a social network of family and friends who know them, will be ready to receive them, and will be more likely to receive their message as well.<sup>8</sup> This is a missional theme in Acts – the missionaries often go to places where they have a relational connection or invitation, operating along the lines of existing social networks even as they follow the Spirit’s leadership.

### 11.1.1 Urban Centres

The Cyprian account focuses on what happens in the two urban centres of the island, Salamis and Paphos.<sup>9</sup> This is a common strategic pattern; Paul consistently focuses on the cities of the Empire, and particularly the regional capitals and Roman colonies. Salamis was a famous city on the mouth of the river Pedieos, and had been an ancient city-state, dating back to at least the eleventh century BCE. It was the capital of the island for many years, but the Romans moved the capital to Paphos in 22 BCE,<sup>10</sup> and made it a senatorial province.<sup>11</sup>

### 11.1.2 First to the Synagogues

Acts 13.5 reveals their basic evangelistic strategy: ‘When they reached Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews’ (κατήγγελλον τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς τῶν Ἰουδαίων). There is a sizeable and established Jewish population on Cyprus by this time.<sup>12</sup> Barnabas was a part of this Jewish community before his conversion

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<sup>8</sup> Col 4.10 tells us that Mark was Barnabas’ cousin, and so likely also had relatives and connections in Cyprus.

<sup>9</sup> For a brief history of Cyprus, cf. Schnabel, *Mission*, 2.1078, for Salamis, 2.1079-1080, for Paphos, 2.1082. See also, Johnson, *Paul*, 57-61. For more detail, see V. Karageorghis, *Cyprus from the Stone Age to the Romans* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1982); F. G. Maier, *Cyprus from Earliest Time to the Present Day* (London: Elek, 1968).

<sup>10</sup> The Paphos of Acts is actually New Paphos. Old Paphos is the mythical birthplace of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and beauty.

<sup>11</sup> Salamis was the large city on the East of the island, Paphos the large city on the West. D. W. J. Gill, ‘Paul’s Travels through Cyprus (Acts 13.4-12)’, *TynB* 46 (1995): 219-228, argues that Paul takes the southern route across the island, which is 115 days, not the northern route, which takes 142 days.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Philo, *Embassy to Gaius*, 282: ‘not only are the continents full of Jewish colonies, but also all the most celebrated islands are so too; such as...Cyprus’; Josephus, *Ant.*, 13.284-287: ‘not only those Jews who were at Jerusalem and in Judea were in prosperity, but also those of them that were at Alexandria, and in...Cyprus’.



to Christianity (4.36), and he surely still has multiple contacts in the Cypriot synagogues and Jewish communities. This habit of offering the message of salvation to the Jews first, and then to the Gentiles is a regular strategic practice of Paul throughout Acts.<sup>13</sup>

‘After they had *gone through* (διελθόντες) the whole island’ (13.6), they reach Paphos. Διέρχομαι may be a hint that they were engaged in missionary outreach along the way between the two main cities, because Luke uses the same word to describe missional activity in 8.4: ‘Those who were scattered *went from place to place* proclaiming the word (διήλθον εὐαγγελιζόμενοι τὸν λόγον).’<sup>14</sup> Luke does not report on the outcome of this missional activity, but the return of Barnabas and John Mark a few years later (15.36-39) indicates that there were churches on Cyprus which they intended to support and strengthen.<sup>15</sup>

### 11.1.3 Supernatural Demonstrations of Power

After arriving in Paphos, Paul and Barnabas rebuke a sorcerer named Elymas, and a supernatural encounter occurs in which Elymas is struck blind (13.6-11).<sup>16</sup> Demonstrations of God’s power and supernatural signs and wonders are commonplace in Acts. This is particularly true when Christianity is in direct conflict with magic, sorcery, or other religious competitors,<sup>17</sup> though cases of healings and other miracles in the narrative are also relevant, for they validate the message being proclaimed.

The observers are in amazement at this supernatural demonstration, and believe, just as the proconsul Sergius Paulus does: ‘he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. 13.14; 14.1; 17.1,10,17; 18.4,19; 19.8. Luke’s description of Paul comports with Paul’s missional principle: ‘to the Jew first but also to the Greek’ (Rom 1.16).

<sup>14</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, 1.612. Διέρχομαι is not a technical term for missionary activity on its own. They probably evangelized in other population centres on Cyprus, such as Kition, Amathos, Neapolis, and Kourion. Schnabel, *Mission*, 2.1074, 1080-1083.

<sup>15</sup> See the stated intention of this later trip, ‘let us visit the brothers in every city (πάσαν πόλιν) where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are’ (15.36). In Acts 21.16 Luke mentions ‘Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple’, who is Paul’s host in Jerusalem when he returns from his mission to Ephesus. He could have been a convert from this missionary trip to Cyprus, or from Barnabas’ later trip there, or elsewhere.

<sup>16</sup> Supernatural means something that is beyond natural, that transcends what is normal or commonplace, and that is usually connected to a spiritual or divine power. Elymas being ‘immediately’ (παραχρημα, 13.11) struck blind is an example of this; the text emphasizes the supernatural nature of this power encounter.

<sup>17</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 397-398.

the Lord' (ἐπίστευσεν ἐκπλησσομένης ἐπὶ τῇ διδασκίᾳ τοῦ κυρίου, 13.12). Ἐκπλήσσω has a strong connotation of being struck with astonishment, to the point of panic or shock, and Sergius Paulus feels this way about the διδασκίᾳ of the Lord. This shows that the miracle is a part of Paul's evangelistic teaching, because it is a supernatural teaching that comes with spiritual authority. The proconsul's ἐκπλήσσω and πιστεύω are logical responses to signs and wonders for Luke.<sup>18</sup> This strategy of practically demonstrating the reality and power of the message is at the heart of the church's missional strategy throughout Acts.

#### 11.1.4 A Person of Influence

The proconsul named Sergius Paulus (Σεργίῳ Παύλῳ) is a focal character (13.7,12). The title τῷ ἀνθυπάτῳ correctly designates the administrator of a Senatorial province, which Cyprus had become in 22 CE.<sup>19</sup> Luke stresses that he is a 'man of intelligence' (ἀνδρὶ συνετῷ, 13.7). In addition to being a head of household, Sergius Paulus would have widespread credibility and influence across the island of Cyprus, as an established member of the local aristocracy.

Sergius Paulus' conversion has social significance, because it presents Paul as a person who finds acceptance in circles of higher society.<sup>20</sup> It would also make an impact on many others, and give social credibility to the Christian movement in Cyprus. By reaching Sergius Paulus, the gospel message gains access to many others, making him an ideal example of the strategic 'person of peace' which Jesus describes in his mission discourse (Lk 10.6). It may be that this proconsul's conversion is why Paul leaves Cyprus so quickly (Acts 13.12,13). Though he is facing no apparent persecution, and has no observable reason to leave, Paul believes that Sergius Paulus' conversion will ensure the continuation of the

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Jesus in Lk 4.32: 'they were amazed (ἐξεπλήσσοντο) at His teaching (διδασκίᾳ), for his message was with authority (ἐξουσία).' Note the parallel use of ἐκπλήσσω and διδασκίᾳ, implying that Paul also has ἐξουσία.

<sup>19</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 222. Luke also uses ἀνθύπατος for the administrators in Corinth (18.12) and Ephesus (19.38). By contrast, imperial provinces were administered by military prefects (ἡγεμόνων) such as Pontius Pilate (Lk 2.2; 3.1), Felix (Acts 23.24,26) and Festus (24.27).

<sup>20</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 404,430-8. Part of Paul's missional strategy has to do with reaching people of influence.



expansion of the church on the island.<sup>21</sup> Luke emphasizes that missionaries can impact an exponentially larger group of people by reaching a person of influence.

### *11.1.5 Existing Social Networks*

Archaeology has found a family with the name Sergius Paulus with connections in Cyprus at this time, which also owned extensive property in the region of Pisidian Antioch.<sup>22</sup> Various hypotheses about this family's influence on the mission of Paul and Barnabas and the larger Christian mission exist.<sup>23</sup> Sergius Paulus likely suggests that Paul and Barnabas go next to Pisidian Antioch, and may even write a letter of recommendation to help them along.<sup>24</sup>

At this point Paul and Barnabas do not have a precise travel plan. They know the Holy Spirit said 'Go' (13.2-4), but are not sure where. So they begin where they have relationship in Cyprus (through Barnabas and John Mark),<sup>25</sup> and then follow where those relationships lead, in this case to Sergius Paulus' family in Pisidian Antioch and S. Galatia.<sup>26</sup> This shows the role social networks play in the strategy and direction of the early church.

### *11.2 Pisidian Antioch (13.13-52)*

This Antioch is designated 'the one near Psidia' to distinguish it from the sixteen other cities named Antioch in the Empire at this time (13.14).<sup>27</sup> It is the civil and administrative centre for its area of the political province of Galatia, and is in the ethnic region of Phrygia.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Schnabel, *Mission*, 2.1088.

<sup>22</sup> W. M. Ramsay has found inscriptions bearing the name L. Sergius Paulus, *Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament* (London: Hodder, 1920): 150-172; cf. Hemer, *Acts*, 109; Nobbs, 'Cyprus', 279-89. Many conclude that the inscription with the boundary stone containing 'Lucius Sergius Paullus', is the proconsul of Acts, and has connections to Pisidian Antioch. See Sergius Paulus' family tree, Schnabel, *Mission*, 2.1084-1089.

<sup>23</sup> E.g., they all became prominent Christians, and stayed in the public eye, W. M. Ramsay, 'The Family and Religion of L. Sergius Paullus, Proconsul of Cyprus', *ET* 29 (1917-18): 324-328; they could explain Saul's name change to Paul, Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 218; they were patrons that helped to establish the church at Rome, G. S. R. Thomas, 'The Origin of the Church at Rome: A New Solution?', *RTR* 25 (1966): 81-94.

<sup>24</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 227; Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 293-294. Cf. Apollos going to Corinth, 18.27. This practice is also clear in Paul's letters, cf. Col 4.10; Rom 16.2; Phil 2.29.

<sup>25</sup> Cyprus is the logical first choice, for at this point Luke still considers Barnabas the leader of the expedition (13.7), and Saul has already spent time in his hometown of Tarsus evangelizing (9.30; 11.25).

<sup>26</sup> In this regard, Acts probably reflects a historical memory which influenced the narrative.

<sup>27</sup> Paul likely goes through the seaport of Attalia, and then to Perga, before arriving at Pisidian Antioch (13.13). This is also when John Mark leaves them to return to Jerusalem (see 15.37-39 for Paul's dissatisfaction).

### 11.2.1 The Synagogue and the God-Fearers

As is their custom, Paul and Barnabas go into the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch, and are asked to give a *λόγος παρακλήσεως*, a word of exhortation and encouragement (13.15; cf. Heb 13.22).<sup>29</sup> The synagogue is a natural 'point of entry', for Paul and Barnabas receive instant credibility as itinerant Jewish preachers, and are invited to teach as guest speakers.<sup>30</sup>

This invitation leads to Paul's first speech in Acts (13.16-47), which is addressed to two groups: 'Israelites' (*ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλῖται*), and 'those who fear God' (*οἱ φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν*, 13.16). The first represents ethnic Jews, or full proselytes to Judaism, and the second refers to God-fearing Gentile sympathizers, who are synagogue adherents on the fringes of the Jewish community, but not full Jewish converts.<sup>31</sup>

God-fearers are a frequent narrative theme in Acts,<sup>32</sup> along with the Jewish synagogue itself.<sup>33</sup> This episode highlights the Pauline missional practice of going to strategic groups of people, who are most likely to be receptive to his message. Paul can expect a degree of kinship and receptivity with his Jewish audience in this setting, and finds it relatively easy to

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<sup>28</sup> Luke properly refers to this area as 'the Phrygian and Galatic region' (16.6), Witherington, *Acts*, 405. For a history and bibliography of Pisidian Antioch, see Schnabel, *Mission*, 2.1098-1103. Galatians is probably written to churches Paul began in places like Pisidian Antioch and Iconium on this missionary journey.

<sup>29</sup> J. J. Kilgallen, 'Acts 13.38-39: Culmination of Paul's Speech in Pisidia', *Biblica* 69 (1988): 480-506, citing 482. On the history of discussion about the origins of this speech, see Schneider, *Apostel.*, 2.129-30.

<sup>30</sup> On the synagogue as a natural first point of contact, cf. Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 26-27, 80-81.

<sup>31</sup> Scholars debate the historical reality of the God-fearers; cf. Hemer, *Acts*, 444-47 for the Aphrodisias Inscription, which supports Luke's usage of *φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν*; T. M. Finn, 'The God-fearers Reconsidered', *CBQ* 47 (1985): 75-84; J. A. Overman, 'The God-fearers: Some Neglected Features', *JSNT* 32 (1988): 17-26, 'there is no reason to assume [Luke] has manufactured the picture of the synagogues and their surrounding communities in Acts...there is every reason to assume the presence of a class of Gentiles associated with the synagogue is an authentic reflection of the diverse composition of diaspora Judaism in the late first century', 24; J. G. Gager, 'Jews, Gentiles and Synagogues in the Book of Acts', *HTR* 79 (1986): 91-99, 'it now seems likely that the *θεοσεβής* was, in some meaningful and official sense, a member of the Jewish community', 99; Le Cornu, *Jewish Roots of Acts*, 719-20; I. Levinskaya, *Acts in its Diaspora Setting*, AIIFCS 5 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996): 51-126.

<sup>32</sup> E.g., the Ethiopian Eunuch, 8.27-39; Cornelius, 10.2,28-29,44-48; the discussion at the Jerusalem council, 15.7-11. If we agree that *σεβόμενοι* is an abbreviation of the full formula *σεβόμενοι (φοβούμενοι) τὸν θεόν*, God-fearers are mentioned 8 times in the book of Acts: 13.16,26,43,50; 16.14; 17.4,17; 18.6-7. These references cover Pisidian Antioch, Caesarea, Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth, a wide geographical range. As Gentiles enjoying a close relationship with Jews, and frequenting Jewish synagogues, they would have naturally been the first group of Gentiles to hear and respond to the Christian message. See Levinskaya, *Diaspora Setting*, 52-58, 120-126, for a discussion of Luke's change in terminology.

<sup>33</sup> *Συναγωγή* occurs 20 times in Acts: 6.9; 9.2,20; 13.5,14,42,43; 14.1; 15.21; 17.1,10,17; 18.4,7,19,26; 19.8; 22.19; 24.12; 26.11. *Ἀρχισυνάγωγος*, synagogue leader, occurs three times: 13.15; 18.8,17.

establish rapport and affinity with absolute strangers. This can be seen in the informal way Paul begins his speech (13.16), and also in his use of ‘brothers’ (ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί, 13.26); Paul is appealing to their shared ethnic and religious heritage.<sup>34</sup>

The God-fearers’ general receptiveness points to the appeal the Christian message has to Gentiles who are drawn to a monotheistic Hebrew religion,<sup>35</sup> but are unable or unwilling to embrace all of its cultural requirements, such as circumcision and dietary restrictions.<sup>36</sup> A monotheistic religion with the same scriptural and theological roots and similar ethical standards, but without the cultural trappings, is attractive to these people within the Jewish Diaspora, who likely become the backbone of the early Gentile Christian communities.

### 11.2.2 A Relevant Message

Paul delivers an exhortational speech in the synagogue (13.16-41).<sup>37</sup> The message is filled with allusions to the Hebrew Scriptures, which introduces another missional theme: Paul always preaches in a way which is relevant to his hearers. At least one third of this speech recounts a story familiar to his Jewish hearers, from the Hebrew Scriptures (13.16-22).

Towards the end, Paul directly quotes from four OT passages (13.33-41): Ps 2.7; Isa 55.3; Ps 16.10; Hab 1.5. His speech is additionally laced with references to Moses (13.39), Abraham (13.26), David (13.22,34,36), the prophets (13.26,37,40), and Israel (13.27,23,24). Paul builds his case for Christ from scripture that is relevant and authoritative to his Jewish listeners, delivering a thoroughly Jewish speech.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 409.

<sup>35</sup> For evidence of Gentiles taking an interest in Judaism, cf. Juvenal’s scorn of this practice, *Satires*, 14.96-103: ‘Some who have had a father who reveres the Sabbath, worship nothing but the clouds, and the divinity of the heavens, and see no difference between eating swine’s flesh, from which their father abstained, and that of man; and in time they take to circumcision. Having been wont to flout the laws of Rome, they learn and practise and revere the Jewish law, and all that Moses handed down in his secret tome.’

<sup>36</sup> This phenomenon of fringe adherents is not unique to Judaism in the ancient world; other religions have various groups with varying levels of commitment and conformity, much like the God-fearers.

<sup>37</sup> Luke portrays Paul as a masterful orator and rhetorician here; Witherington, *Acts*, 407-14, analyzes this speech.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. the evangelistic Areopagus speech (17.22-31), where Paul builds his message in a different way, not mentioning the Hebrew Scriptures, but referencing Greek poets and proverbs. Paul does not deliver a ‘stock message’, but he preaches in a way that is relevant to his audience, and meets them where they are.

Many Jews respond favourably (13.42-43), but some incite the crowds to turn against Paul and Barnabas (13.44-45). This causes Paul and Barnabas to turn to the Gentiles, justifying this from Isa 49.6 (13.46-47).<sup>39</sup> This follows Paul's missional approach: present the message first to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles. The result is that multiple people are converted to Christianity in Pisidian Antioch, and an embryonic church is born (13.48).

### *11.2.3 Planting Local Churches to Impact Regions*

As a result of this initial core of new believers in Pisidian Antioch, 'the word of the Lord spread (or was carried) throughout the entire region' (διεφέρετο δὲ ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου δι' ὅλης τῆς χώρας, 13.49).<sup>40</sup> Διαφέρω in Acts has the connotation of being carried or borne throughout an area.<sup>41</sup> This should be understood to mean that the word of the Lord spread by being carried by specific messengers and missionaries throughout that entire region.<sup>42</sup>

This highlights a geographical missionary strategy in Acts. Paul's goal is to establish the initial nucleus of believers in an urban centre or regional capital city, such as Pisidian Antioch. He stays long enough to disciple this new group and establish solid foundations of faith and mission in them, but then he leaves them to evangelize their own region.<sup>43</sup> Paul plants a seed (a new house church, or core community of Christ-followers) in the fertile spiritual soil of an influential urban centre, and then leaves it to take root, grow up, and spread out into the surrounding region.<sup>44</sup> It can be presumed that un-named messengers not commissioned with Paul and Barnabas (13.1-3) carry out this regional mission to Pisidian Antioch's surrounding district.<sup>45</sup> When local believers are empowered to take responsibility

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<sup>39</sup> Again, 'speaking the language' of their Hebrew listeners, the Hebrew scripture.

<sup>40</sup> This is a typical way Luke notifies us of the mission's success in a region; cf. Acts 2.41,47; 6.7; 9.31; 11.24; 12.24. Johnson, *Acts*, 242.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. the ship being carried or driven about, *διαφερομένων*, in the Adriatic Sea, 27.27

<sup>42</sup> The region that Pisidian Antioch controlled was large, including over 50 villages, Schnabel, *Mission*, 2.1107.

<sup>43</sup> Acts makes no claim that Paul and Barnabas were directly involved in this regional mission, and reports that they were expelled from the city fairly quickly. This is in opposition to Schnabel, who seems to think that they were the ones evangelizing the surrounding villages and towns, *Mission*, 2.1107.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 3.6: 'I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.'

<sup>45</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, 1.659. These were likely not professional full-time missionaries, taken from the new churches.

for outreach in their surrounding areas this initiates a reproducing missional strategy, capable of impacting large areas fairly quickly, as local missionaries are trained and mobilized. This centre-oriented regional approach to mission is repeated multiple times in Acts.

#### *11.2.4 The Backlash of Persecution and the Unstoppable Advance of the Church*

The success of the Word incites further opposition, which results in a wave of persecution which ‘threw out’ (ἐξέβαλον) Paul and Barnabas from that region (13.50). This is another theme in Acts; Paul is often forced to leave an area because of persecution and opposition. Paul and Barnabas shake the dust off of their feet (ἐκτιναξάμενοι τὸν κονιορτὸν τῶν ποδῶν, 13.51), expressing in action their warnings about rejecting the Word (13.40-41,46-47).<sup>46</sup>

However, Luke says that ‘the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit’ (μαθηταὶ ἐπληροῦντο χαρᾶς καὶ πνεύματος ἁγίου, 13.52), which is a Lukan indicator that a group’s conversion is genuine (cf. e.g., 8.38; 10.44-46). ‘Luke is concerned to show how the word spread, but also how local communities prospered (see 14.21-23). The code words used here by Luke indicate that this foundation is an authentic realization of the Church.’<sup>47</sup> Paul and Barnabas leave a Christian community in Pisidian Antioch, undeterred by persecution, and missionally expanding into its surrounding regions.

#### *11.3 Iconium (14.1-7)*

Paul and Barnabas leave Pisidian Antioch and travel to Iconium, a journey of at least ninety miles,<sup>48</sup> which raises the question of Paul’s methods of transport.

##### *11.3.1 Following Established Routes of Transport*

On Paul’s first journey, he sails from Seleucia to Salamis, a common shipping route, and then walks along one of the two main roads from Salamis to Paphos. He then sails from Salamis

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. the missional instructions of Jesus in Lk 9.5; 10.11.

<sup>47</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 243. The church is filled with joy (13.48), and with the Holy Spirit (2.4; 4.31; 8.17; 9.31; 10.44; 13.2).

<sup>48</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 417.

to Pamphylia, almost certainly disembarking at Attalia, the entry port of Pamphylia.<sup>49</sup> From Attalia, he takes a paved road to Perge, the metropolis of Pamphylia.<sup>50</sup> At Perge, he joins the *Via Sebaste*, a broad and well-paved road connecting the Roman colonies in the region, designed to accommodate wheeled vehicles,<sup>51</sup> which runs all the way from Perge (maybe even Attalia), to Pisidian Antioch, and then on to Iconium, and likely Lystra as well.<sup>52</sup> Paul follows the *Via Sebaste* to Iconium, and then flees from Iconium to Lystra on the same road. He then follows another road, perhaps unpaved, to Derbe and the surrounding region.<sup>53</sup> Finally, he follows the same roads back to Attalia, before returning to Syrian Antioch by ship.

‘Only the simplest of all possible reconstructions is necessary for an exposition of Paul’s first journey into Asia Minor’.<sup>54</sup> He travels on paved Roman roads and sails on common shipping routes wherever possible along his route. These established transport and trade routes probably even influence the next places that he travels, particularly when he is navigating difficult terrain.<sup>55</sup> Paul takes the easiest route into Asia Minor, and then focuses on cities where there are Jewish Diaspora communities who would offer him hospitality.<sup>56</sup>

### 11.3.2 Local Jewish Communities

The missional progression at Iconium follows that at Pisidian Antioch: ‘as usual’ (ὡς ἄνωγες),<sup>57</sup> Paul and Barnabas begin their outreach by entering the synagogue, and speaking in a similar fashion (14.1). This confirms a strategic missional pattern. Once again, a great number of

<sup>49</sup> D. H. French, ‘Acts and the Roman Roads of Asia Minor’, *Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, D. W. J. Gill and C. H. Gempf, eds., AIFCS 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994): 49-58, citing 52. Acts fails to mention Attalia in Paul’s arrival into Pamphylia, but does mention it in his departure back to Syrian Antioch (14.26).

<sup>50</sup> One such road was built under Tiberius, and probably repaired under Claudius, D. H. French, *Roman Roads and Milestones of Asia Minor*, fasc. 2, *An Interim Catalogue of Milestones* (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1981): 183.

<sup>51</sup> Milestones indicate this. It was built in 6 BCE by the Emperor Augustus. French, ‘Roman Roads’, 52.

<sup>52</sup> French, ‘Roman Roads’, 52.

<sup>53</sup> French, ‘Roman Roads’, 53.

<sup>54</sup> French, ‘Roman Roads’, 52. It is more difficult to reconstruct the exact routes of the second and third missionary journeys, ‘Roman Roads’, 53-58.

<sup>55</sup> Such as the mountainous regions between Perge and Pisidian Antioch, French, ‘Roman Roads’, 50-51.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. the synagogues in Pisidian Antioch (13.14), and Iconium (14.1). There is no reason to doubt that Paul continues to follow this same basic travel pattern throughout his missionary journeys.

<sup>57</sup> ὡς ἄνωγες means ‘as usual’, ‘in the same way’, or ‘in like manner’, referring to what preceded it.

Jews and Gentiles believe. Persecution again emerges, but this time Paul and Barnabas are able to stay for a ‘considerable time’ (ἰκανὸν μὲν οὖν χρόνον) in Iconium, speaking boldly (παρρησιαζόμενοι) for the Lord and the message of his grace (14.2-3).<sup>58</sup>

### 11.3.3 Signs and Wonders

‘The Lord confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do (διδόντι, lit. giving) miraculous signs and wonders’ (σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα, 14.3). Σημεῖον means a sign or distinguishing mark whereby something is known, or a confirmation.<sup>59</sup> Τέρας is something that astounds because of its transcendent association, such as an omen, portent, or wonder.<sup>60</sup> These concepts summarize the role of the miraculous in the mission: it confirms the message that is being preached, and causes people to wonder and be astounded, because they are aware of its supernatural power. The importance of signs and wonders is underscored in Barnabas and Paul’s summary of this first journey before the Jerusalem Council (15.12).<sup>61</sup>

Luke is not interested in miracles for their own sake, but in miracles that confirm the truthfulness of the word that is being proclaimed, and make people wonder what is behind it. ‘The powerful deeds here as elsewhere serve to certify the message being proclaimed.’<sup>62</sup>

This theme points to another of the early church’s central missional strategies: supernatural signs and wonders validate and authenticate the message being proclaimed.<sup>63</sup>

### 11.3.4 Bold Evangelism, Despite Persecution

Evangelistic success leads to persecution in Iconium (14.5), so Paul and Barnabas flee to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe, outside of the Phrygian region (14.6).<sup>64</sup> This continues

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<sup>58</sup> This surely involves teaching, training and mentoring as the new Christians develop (‘the brothers’, 14.2).

<sup>59</sup> *BDAG*, 920.

<sup>60</sup> *BDAG*, 999. All nine occurrences of τέρας in Acts are coupled directly with σημεῖον: 2.19; 2.22; 2.43; 4.30; 5.12; 6.8; 7.36; 14.3; 15.12. Σημεῖον occurs four additional times: 4.16,22; 8.6,13.

<sup>61</sup> The only thing they relate is the ‘signs and wonders (σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα) God had done through them’ (15.12).

<sup>62</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 246. Cf. 2 Cor 12.12.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Acts 2.19,22,43; 4.16,22,30; 5.12; 6.8; 7.36; 8.6,13; 13.22; 15.8; 20.23. Witherington, *Acts*, 419. The Lord also ‘bears witness’ (μαρτυρέω) through signs and wonders: 13.22; 15.8; 20.23.

<sup>64</sup> Lystra would have been about a six hour journey by foot, about eighteen miles. Derbe was at least a further fifty-five miles away. These were two of the principal cities of the region of Lycaonia, along with Laranda and

the pattern of going to the chief cities of a region, which are connected by well-travelled roads and transport links. Luke adds, 'and the surrounding regions/circumjacent vicinity' (*καὶ τὴν περὶχωρον*, 14.6), which hints at the regional evangelistic strategy which Paul intentionally pursues. He focuses on key population centres, where the majority of the people are concentrated, but always does this with the regional vicinity in mind.

Another of Paul's core strategies is to preach the good news continuously, wherever he happens to be. Wherever he goes, even when opposed, he remains undaunted by threats and persecution, and 'continues to preach the good news' (*εὐαγγελιζόμενοι*, 14.7). He is convinced that the Spirit is leading his journey, and therefore he tells people the gospel message wherever he finds himself. Even when fleeing persecution in Iconium, Paul and Barnabas still boldly evangelize in Lystra and Derbe and the surrounding countryside.

#### ***11.4 Lystra and Derbe (14.8-21a)***

##### ***11.4.1 Miracles and Relevant Proclamation***

Paul and Barnabas arrive in Lystra, where Luke tells a colourful story about the healing (*σωθῆναι*) of a man lame from birth (14.8-10).<sup>65</sup> This re-emphasizes one of Paul's missional approaches; he allows supernatural miracles, such as healings, to confirm and underscore the urgent reality of the message he is preaching. However, in this instance, the miracle leads to Paul and Barnabas being worshipped as Hermes and Zeus (14.11-13).<sup>66</sup>

Paul and Barnabas rush into the crowd to stop this, and preach briefly (14.14-18). There is no mention of Jews or a synagogue in Lystra, which helps to explain the different nature of this speech, which seeks to find common ground with a Gentile audience through

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Parlais. The key is that both were beyond the jurisdiction of the Phrygian officials who were threatening Paul and Barnabas, and therefore much safer. Barrett, *Acts*, 1.672-673; Witherington, *Acts*, 420.

<sup>65</sup> Many commentators have noticed these stories' similarities with Peter's miracle narrative in 3.1-10: each story starts with the exact same description of the lame man, each man leaps up and walks once healed, each healer looks intently at the lame man in question, each uses *ἀτενίσας*. Witherington, *Acts*, 422-423.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. the parallels with the myth in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 8.626-724. This story is set in the Phrygian country.



natural theology.<sup>67</sup> They argue that God is present in creation, which is a silent witness (μάρτυς) of his goodness (14.15-17), and that God seeks to satisfy (ἐμπιπλῶν) the needs of people and give them joy (εὐφροσύνης), because he cares about them (14.17).<sup>68</sup> Relevant preaching, tailored to his audience, is one of Paul's repeated missionary strategies.

#### 11.4.2 Persecution and Divine Providence

Jews from Pisidian Antioch and Iconium arrive and convince the crowd to stone (λιθάσαντες) Paul, drag him out of the city (ἔσυρον ἔξω τῆς πόλεως), and leave him for dead (νομίσαντες αὐτὸν τεθνηκέαι, 14.19).<sup>69</sup> Luke is not elevating Paul as the 'noble sufferer' here,<sup>70</sup> but he is explaining that this is how it sometimes is when one takes the mission of God seriously.<sup>71</sup> Luke's main purpose is to reassure his readers when they undergo similar experiences: they should not be surprised when they suffer, and God will care for them, as he cares for Paul.

'The disciples' (μαθητῶν) who surround (κυκλωσάντων) Paul's body are probably the new converts in Lystra (14.20).<sup>72</sup> This shows that a new church is established in Lystra, along with Paul's two visits for subsequent follow-up (14.21-23; 16.1-3). Paul gets up, rests for a day in Lystra, then departs for Derbe, a journey of fifty to sixty miles (14.20).<sup>73</sup> Once

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<sup>67</sup> See F. G. Downing, 'Common Ground with Paganism in Luke and Josephus', *NTS* 28 (1982): 546-59. This episode re-enforces Luke's theme of persecution and the suffering of the messenger of the word, discussed previously, and the apostolic ethos of the early church as a primary missional stimulus.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Schnabel, *Mission*, 2.1117-18. This anticipates the Areopagus speech (Acts 17.24-31).

<sup>69</sup> Although Luke carefully avoids saying Paul dies, the narrative implies that Paul is in an unconscious or semi-conscious state, after a severe beating. The prophecy concerning how much Paul would have to suffer for the sake of the name is being fulfilled (9.16). In his second letter to the Corinthians Paul states that he has been 'many times near death' (11.23), and that he was 'by the Jews...stoned once' (the same word, ἐλιθάσθην, 11.25).

<sup>70</sup> Though there is no doubt that the bravery of early Christian missionaries and martyrs was impressive to observers. Galen, the physician to emperors, wrote of Christians that 'their contempt of death is patent to us every day', quoted in Stark, *Rise of Christianity*, 165. See Stark's discussion on suffering and martyrdom as rational choice, 163-89. 'How much more credible witnesses could be found than those who demonstrate the worth of a faith by embracing torture and death?', 188. On the 'righteous sufferer', see Pesch, *Apostel.*, 1.250.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. the thematic statement about the necessity of entering the kingdom through many tribulations, 14.22

<sup>72</sup> It is possible that these are Paul's unnamed traveling companions, though less likely (13.13). They literally 'formed a circle (κυκλωσάντων) around him', of protection and/or support. Johnson, *Acts*, 253.

<sup>73</sup> Luke leaves many details about Paul's personal experiences unclear, which underscores that Luke's purposes in writing are not primarily biographical, but focused towards the advancing mission and establishment of churches, Witherington, *Acts*, 428. 'Luke draws our attention here not so much to the personality or power of Paul as to the process by which early Christian communities came into being and were nurtured. The value of this text lies...in the feel it gives us for the pastoral practices of the early Messianists', Johnson, *Acts*, 256.

again, the mission is not defeated by human opposition, but is sustained and furthered by Divine power and providence.

In Derbe<sup>74</sup> Paul and Barnabas preach the good news (εὐαγγελιστάμενοι), and ‘made many disciples’ (μαθητεύσαντες ἱκανούς, 14.21a).<sup>75</sup> These phrases imply that the nucleus of another new church and regional mission is established in Derbe.

### ***11.5 Return to Syrian Antioch (14.21b-28)***

It would be easier for Paul and Barnabas to continue in the direction they are going, and return to Syrian Antioch overland via Tarsus, the city of Paul’s birth.<sup>76</sup> However, their goal is not to return home quickly, but to complete the task they have been given, and ensure that all of their efforts are not in vain.<sup>77</sup> For this reason, Paul and Barnabas return through every city that they have visited, even though they have suffered violent threats in most of them.<sup>78</sup>

#### ***11.5.1 Strengthening the Churches***

As they go through Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, they strengthen (ἐπιστηρίζοντες – establish, strengthen, render more firm) the disciples by encouraging (παρακαλοῦντες – exhort, entreat, admonish, comfort, instruct) them to persevere in the faith (ἐμμένειν τῇ πίστει, 14.21b-22a).

Ἐπιστηρίζω only occurs in the NT in Acts.<sup>79</sup> Luke relates it to the pastoral follow-up and encouragement of the churches, and it occurs in each of Paul’s missionary journeys: they strengthen the souls (ψυχάς) of the new disciples (14.22), Judas and Silas strengthen the brothers at the church at Antioch through prophetic encouragement (15.32), Paul and Silas

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<sup>74</sup> Scholars are uncertain of Derbe’s precise location. See G. Ogg, ‘Derbe’, *NTS* 9 (1962-63): 367-70.

<sup>75</sup> This is the only time when the verb μαθητεύω is used in Luke-Acts, though cf. Mt 13.52; 27.57; 28.19, ‘make disciples of all the nations’. Johnson, *Acts*, 253.

<sup>76</sup> They pursue this overland route at the beginning of their second journey.

<sup>77</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, 1.685.

<sup>78</sup> ‘This return through the cities already evangelized is far from a flight; it is a pastoral visitation...the image of the apostles is of truly philosophical courage as they return to the places where they had been so badly treated’, Johnson, *Acts*, 253.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Jesus’ command to Peter after he has been restored, Lk 22.32: ‘strengthen your brothers’ (στήριξον τοὺς ἀδελφούς σου). Στήριζω is the root of ἐπιστηρίζω, and implies permanence, or being established. Paul uses στήριζω for such pastoral behavior, and the desire to ‘establish’ the new churches and believers: Rom 1.11; 16.25; 1 Thes 3.2,13; 2 Thes 2.17; 3.3. Johnson, *Acts*, 254. Cf. 1 Pet 5.10; 2 Pet 1.12.

strengthen the churches throughout Syria and Cilicia (15.41), and Paul strengthens the disciples throughout the Galatian and Phrygian regions (18.23).

Their message to the fledgling communities is sobering: ‘We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God’ (διὰ πολλῶν θλίψεων δεῖ ἡμᾶς εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ, 14.22b).<sup>80</sup> This refers to the suffering and persecution that the new converts are enduring, and is an attempt to reassure them that this is not abnormal. ‘The task for Paul and Barnabas is the stabilization of new communities in the face of opposition.’<sup>81</sup>

The visiting of already founded churches represents a new stage in Paul’s missional strategy. After the founding of the core of a Christian community, Paul tends to leave fairly quickly (though see Acts 14.3), often forced out by persecution and threats. He knows these new churches cannot afford to be overly dependent on him, and need to learn how to function independently. However, he does not leave them permanently, but returns for pastoral visits, to train and strengthen them in their faith and mission.<sup>82</sup>

Paul does not personally lead these infant churches. But he is willing to sacrifice, even to the point of personal endangerment and exhaustion, to support and equip them so that they can survive and flourish.<sup>83</sup> These initial Christian gatherings are meant to be missional bases for regional outreach, so Paul also trains them to impact their surrounding areas. He wants them to grow into regional movements of Christ-followers.<sup>84</sup> Though Luke focuses more on the initial establishment of the churches, the long-term sustainability of the churches

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<sup>80</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 6.9-10; 15.10.

<sup>81</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 254.

<sup>82</sup> This is repeated throughout Acts, and is more useful after a period of time on their own, in which these new communities have discovered questions and challenges with which they would need Paul’s help.

<sup>83</sup> This missional priority can also be seen in Paul’s second and third missionary journeys. He returns to each of these cities at the beginning of his second and third missionary journeys, ‘strengthening the churches/disciples’ (15.41; 16.1-5; 18.23). He is determined that the newly founded churches would flourish and grow, and visits the churches at least three times to follow-up with them, strengthen them, and make sure they are doing well.

<sup>84</sup> Another aspect of Paul’s missional strategy is his letter writing, though Acts fails to mention it. Galatians is probably written to these churches in Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. Many of Paul’s later letters are also written to churches that he directly established.

is surely Paul's greater priority. He will do anything within his power to assist them in becoming permanent missional hubs for regional expansion in their own right.

### *11.5.2 Appointing Local Leadership*

It is not enough to strengthen and encourage the new churches. They also require a long-term, sustainable leadership structure, which will allow them to develop in a healthy way. To provide this stability, Paul and Barnabas appoint elders for each new congregation

(χειροτονήσαντες δὲ αὐτοῖς κατ'ἐκκλησίαν πρεσβύτερους, 14.23a).<sup>85</sup> This creates recognized local leadership and direction, as the churches grow: 'As with the visitation and exhortation, Luke is showing how the early communities were nurtured and stabilized.'<sup>86</sup>

Paul and Barnabas solemnly commit the new elders in each church to the Lord, presenting them to the Lord in whom they had recently put their trust (παρέθεντο αὐτοὺς τῷ Κυρίῳ εἰς ὃν πεπιστεύκεισαν, 14.23c). Παρατίθημι has the connotation of presenting to another or 'entrusting', usually in deposit or for safekeeping.<sup>87</sup> Luke emphasizes the soberness of this occasion, saying they did this, 'having prayed with (plural) fastings' (προσευξάμενοι μετὰ νηστειῶν, 14.23b), and with the laying on of hands (χειροτονήσαντες, 14.23a).<sup>88</sup> The ordination of these elders echoes that of Paul and Barnabas as they began this very mission (13.2,3). This episode completes a ministry cycle for Luke; Paul and Barnabas have been appointed with prayer, fasting and the laying on of hands, sent out to the mission

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<sup>85</sup> Πρεσβύτερος may have been borrowed from the Jewish synagogue, and is common in the NT (cf. e.g., Acts 4.5; 11.30; 15.6; 1 Tim 5.17; 1 Pet 5.1-2; 2 Jn 1; 3 Jn 1; and esp. Tit 1.5). Witherington, *Acts*, 429.

<sup>86</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 254.

<sup>87</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 255. Cf. Lev 6.4; Ps 30.5; Lk 12.48. Jesus commits (παρατίθεται) his spirit into the Father's hands, Lk 23.46. Paul later commends (παρατίθεται) the Ephesian elders to God and to His grace, which is able to build them up and give them an inheritance (Acts 20.32). This is also a missional word (ch. 3).

<sup>88</sup> Κειροτονέω literally means to stretch out the hands, and was used for the raising of hands in an election (Plato, *Laws*, 763E), and Josephus uses it in the sense of being 'appointed' to the chief priesthood (*Ant.*, 13.45). Luke seems to use it synonymously with 'laying on hands'. Cf. this appointment with the appointment of the Seven (6.5-6), Paul's commission and receiving the Spirit (9.17; 8.17), and the appointment of Paul and Barnabas themselves (13.1-3). This was an important aspect of the leadership development process of the early church. Paul himself uses κειροτονέω for the 'appointment' of Titus as representative of the churches (1 Cor 8.19). Johnson, *Acts*, 254.

field, and now they are doing the same for new leaders raised up to lead the fruit of their labours, the new churches, and these leaders will presumably do the same for others in time.

The appointing of elders in every church is another aspect of Paul's overall missional strategy in Acts. Local congregations require local leadership and pastoral care. Paul tends to wait a bit, to see who will prove faithful and capable, emerging as a natural leader within the new community. But fairly quickly, Paul selects local overseers, to help lead the church forward; this provides the young communities with stability and sustainability.

### *11.5.3 Proclaiming the Word Everywhere*

Paul and Barnabas make their way down to Perga, where they 'spoke the word' (*λαλήσαντες τὸν λόγον*, 14.25). This 'aside' sheds insight into Paul's missionary strategy – he preaches the word everywhere he goes. Paul and Barnabas are simply going through Perga, on their way home to Antioch. Yet even after the lengthy trip and all the suffering they have endured, they actively preach the word. Acts also mentions this practice in Salamis (13.5), Paphos (13.12), Pisidian Antioch (13.16-49), Iconium (14.1), Lystra and Derbe (14.6-7), and again in Derbe, after being nearly stoned to death (14.21).<sup>89</sup> In Acts, Paul is committed to proclaiming the gospel everywhere, no matter what obstacles or challenges he encounters.<sup>90</sup>

### *11.5.4 Returning to Home Base*

Upon leaving Perga, Paul and Barnabas travel to Attalia, and sail back to Antioch, the origin of their missionary journey (14.24-26). This detail reveals another aspect of Paul's comprehensive missional strategy.<sup>91</sup> For Luke, when a missionary is sent out to accomplish a task, he must return to report on his progress once it is completed. This is seen in the way Luke describes Antioch, 'from which they had been commissioned (*παραδεδομένοι* – handed

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<sup>89</sup> On the first missionary journey, it is only in Seleucia and Attalia (both port cities) that there is no explicit mention of Paul preaching the word (two out of nine destinations). Paul probably preached there as well, and Luke simply did not know about it, or failed to mention it. There is an obvious pattern here.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Rom 10.15: 'How will they call on him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?'

<sup>91</sup> It is repeated at the end of Paul's second missionary journey, 18.22, and likely would have been at the end of his third, had Paul not been taken captive.

over) to the grace of God for the work that they had accomplished/completed' (τὸ ἔργον δὲ ἐπλήρωσαν, 14.26). This accountability aspect of the mission is crucial.<sup>92</sup> Paul and Barnabas are not merely out on their own, travelling haphazardly like 'lone rangers'. They have roots, they are attached to a local congregation in Syrian Antioch, and they must return to that fellowship to give an account: 'Throughout this narrative, Paul and Barnabas are portrayed as loyal and active members of the local Antiochean congregation; they had been commissioned by it, and now they report back.'<sup>93</sup>

Upon arriving in Antioch, 'they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them (συναγαγόντες τὴν ἐκκλησίαν ἀνήγγελλαν ὅσα ἐποίησεν ὁ Θεὸς μετ' αὐτῶν) and how he had opened the door of faith (θύραν πίστεως) to the Gentiles' (14.27).<sup>94</sup> This gathering must have included quite a lot of dramatic stories and celebration, as Paul and Barnabas share the events which had transpired on their journey over the last two or three years. Here is a church which has participated in Paul and Barnabas' epic journey as the senders and the 'home base' for these missionaries, and which has ownership of its outcome.

#### *11.5.5 Rest and Relationships*

Luke emphasizes that Paul and Barnabas 'stayed there for no little time' (διέτριβον δὲ χρόνον οὐκ ὀλίγον, 14.28).<sup>95</sup> They settle back into life and ministry within the church at Antioch, and also take this time to rest.<sup>96</sup> The travel they have returned from would have been exhausting on its own, not to mention all of the struggles and persecution which they have endured. To

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<sup>92</sup> 'Accountability' means a responsibility to someone for something, or giving an account of oneself. Paul and Barnabas feel responsible to return to their sending congregation at Antioch to give an account of what has happened since they left. This is underscored by Luke's use of ἀναγγέλλω (to give a report, 14.27): their accountable relationship requires that they give a report of their activities to their commissioning church.

<sup>93</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 255.

<sup>94</sup> The use of 'door' is a distinctively Pauline expression, not found elsewhere in the NT. Paul uses door (θύρα) in this sense of opportunity multiple times, cf. 1 Cor 16.9; 2 Cor 2.12; Col 4.3. Johnson, *Acts*, 255.

<sup>95</sup> The duration of this stay is uncertain, Barrett, *Acts*, 1.693.

<sup>96</sup> This strategic theme is repeated in 18.23, at the end of Paul's second missionary journey.

be effective missionaries for the long-term, they must learn to couple the cycles of intensive work and stress with periods of recovery and rejuvenation.<sup>97</sup>

Luke also emphasizes that they stay for this extended time ‘with the disciples’ (σὺν τοῖς μαθηταῖς, 14.28). Paul and Barnabas had spent a significant amount of time leading and ministering in Syrian Antioch prior to embarking on their missionary journey (at least a ‘whole year’, ἐνιαυτὸν ἄλλο, 11.26), and would have formed some deep relationships within that church. Many of these would be refreshing friendships with whom they enjoyed substantial shared experience and history, and therefore vital to their rest and recovery. It is also likely that during this extended time of rest and recovery Paul writes his letter to the Galatians, shortly before going up to Jerusalem for the council on the Gentiles.<sup>98</sup>

### **11.6 Conclusions**

Multiple themes and patterns have emerged, which provide insight into the missional strategies employed to establish and expand the church. Tannehill picks up on some of these:

Acts 13-14 presents a representative picture of Paul’s mission and includes many themes that we will encounter again. He preaches first in the Jewish synagogues but turns to Gentiles when the synagogue preaching is no longer possible. He announces the one God to Gentiles who have no contact with Jewish monotheism. He repeatedly encounters persecution and moves on when necessary, but he does not abandon his mission. He works signs and wonders. He strengthens the new churches. In this mission Paul is fulfilling the Lord’s prophecy that he would ‘bear my name before Gentiles, and kings and sons of Israel’ and ‘must suffer for my name’ (9.15-16).<sup>99</sup>

It is likely that these strategies develop in Paul’s mind and practice as he proceeds. There is a discernible progression of development to his missionary habits, particularly in the next two missionary journeys. But it is remarkable that even in this first journey, many of these core missional strategies are already intentionally in place.

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<sup>97</sup> Acts presents Paul and Barnabas in a healthy and balanced light. This cycle of exertion and recovery is important – Paul is not a ‘super-missionary’, able to continually live the intensive lifestyle of chs. 13-21. He requires times of recovery, to be prepared for the next missional excursion.

<sup>98</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 430. The return to Jerusalem narratively sets the stage for the Jerusalem council, which dominates the following chapter of Acts (15), but may not have necessarily happened immediately after Paul and Barnabas’ return. Their missionary success was undoubtedly one of the primary causes of the Council; the leaders in Jerusalem needed to re-think how the church would be structured, and how its missionary efforts would proceed, given the much more wide-spread Gentile involvement.

<sup>99</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2.182.

## CHAPTER 12 – PAUL’S SECOND JOURNEY (15.30-18.23a)

**Table 12.1 The Second Itinerary (15.30-18.23a) – 50-52 CE<sup>1</sup>**

15.30	Syrian Antioch	17.1	Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica
15.41	Syria and Cilicia	17.10	Berea
16.1	Derbe, Lystra	17.15	Athens (by foot or ship)
16.6	Phrygia and Galatia (but not Asia)	18.1	Corinth
16.7	Mysia (but not Bithynia)	18.18	Cenchrea
16.8	Troas	18.19	Ephesus (by ship)
16.11	Samothrace and Neapolis (by ship)	18.22	Caesarea (by ship), Jerusalem, Syrian
16.12	Philippi		Antioch

### **12.1 Through Syria, Cilicia, and Galatia (15.30-16.5)**

In the first missionary journey Luke emphasizes that the conversion and inclusion of Gentiles in the church is genuine; this is not an idiosyncratic development, but a permanent shift.

These new churches are ‘filled with joy and the Holy Spirit’ (13.52), ‘disciples’ (14.20-21), have ‘signs and wonders’ worked among them (14.3), are undergoing suffering to test their faith and trustworthiness (14.22; cf. Lk 8.13-16), and have ‘faith to be saved’ (14.9).<sup>2</sup> Paul and Barnabas’ missionary success among Gentiles provokes controversy in the Jerusalem church (15.1-5), and leads to the Jerusalem Council (15.6-35), which brings clarity to many of the questions about Gentile inclusion and the Jewish Law. It is in the context of this affirmation of Paul’s Gentile mission that plans for his second missionary journey take shape.

#### **12.1.1 Priority #1 – Strengthening the Churches**

After the resolution of the Jerusalem Council, Paul says to Barnabas, ‘let us go back and visit our brothers in every city (ἐπιστρέψαντες δὴ ἐπισκεψώμεθα τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς ἡμῶν κατὰ πόλιν πᾶσαν) where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are’ (15.36).

Ἐπισκέπτομαι means to visit, but includes the connotation of being concerned about, inspecting one’s progress, and looking after in order to help, benefit, or care and provide for.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, it can be assumed that Paul walked from place to place. These were not the only places that Paul went on this journey, but the ones that Luke records for us. This chapter will also follow the chronological outline of the Acts narrative, and identify key missional strategies within that framework.

<sup>2</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 257. These point to the genuineness of their faith and identity as the true ἐκκλησία.

<sup>3</sup> BDAG, 378.



All of these are motivations for Paul's desire to 'visit' the churches, and this suggestion prompts Paul's second missionary journey.<sup>4</sup> It also underscores Paul's priority: pastoral care of the new churches and continued relationship with them is essential.<sup>5</sup> Barnabas takes John Mark with him to Cyprus, after a sharp disagreement (*παροξυσμός*, a strong word) with Paul over Mark's suitability for the task,<sup>6</sup> and Paul chooses Silas to travel with him (15.37-40).<sup>7</sup>

Paul and Silas' first task is to 'go throughout Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches' (*ἐπιστηρίζων τὰς ἐκκλησίας*, 15.41).<sup>8</sup> What *ἐπιστηρίζω* means in Acts and the NT has already been seen, but in the larger ancient world it has the connotation of causing to rest on, or making to lean or stand on.<sup>9</sup> Luke is creating a vivid image of Paul's effect on the churches: Paul provides support and stability to these young congregations by allowing them to spiritually and metaphorically lean on him, to stand on the strength and maturity of his life.

This journey is a parallel with the pastoral circuit in 14.22-23, though the cities are in reverse because they are approaching from the opposite direction, and includes the churches in Paul's hometown of Tarsus, which is in Cilicia (9.11; 21.39; 22.3).<sup>10</sup> After passing through the Cilician gate, and some rugged and mountainous territory, Paul and Silas reach Derbe, and then go on to Lystra, and the other cities in the area where there are young churches. 'As they travelled from city to city (*διεπορεύοντο τὰς πόλεις*), they delivered the

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<sup>4</sup> This surely would have included the places they visited in Cyprus, which Barnabas ends up visiting.

<sup>5</sup> One can feel Paul's tenderness towards these young churches in the way that he speaks of them as 'our brothers', and in his eagerness to check on them and remain close to them. He is like a loving and concerned father. Cf. this theme in Paul's letters, Rom 1.11; Phil 1.3-8; 1 Thes 2.8; 1 Cor 4.15; 2 Cor 11.28-29.

<sup>6</sup> Caused by Mark's 'desertion' in 13.13. 'Luke does not portray his heroes as free from human passions; he uses a strong term to describe this quarrel', Bruce, *Acts*, 249. See also, 15.1-2. Paul was later reconciled with Mark (Phlm 24; Col 4.10; 2 Tim 4.11), and with Barnabas as well (1 Cor 9.6).

<sup>7</sup> Silas is a good choice; he could represent the Jerusalem church (15.32), and interpret the Jerusalem decree (16.4), as a capable co-worker and possible co-author of some of Paul's letters (1 and 2 Thess., 1 Cor 1.19), and a Roman citizen (16.37-38). Witherington, *Acts*, 473.

<sup>8</sup> *Ἐπιστηρίζω* is used in Acts 4 times in this sense of strengthening the churches or the disciples: 14.22; 15.32,41; 18.23. The related word *στερεόω*, to strengthen, make firm, or make solid, is also used in the same sense in 16.5. Strengthening and establishing the churches is an important part of Paul's missional strategy.

<sup>9</sup> Liddell & Scott, *Lexicon*, 660. E.g., Ps 31.8: 'You have *set* my feet [caused them to stand] in a large place'; Ex 17.12: 'Moses' hands were heavy...and Aaron and Hur *supported* his hands, one on one side and one on the other. Thus his hands were steady until the sun set.'

<sup>10</sup> 9.30; 11.25 – Did Paul himself help to establish the church in Tarsus, shortly after his conversion?

decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem...so the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers' (ἐκκλησίαι ἐστερεοῦντο τῇ πίστει καὶ ἐπερίσσευον τῷ ἀριθμῷ καθ' ἡμέραν, 16.4-5). Luke uses στερεῶ, related to ἐπιστηρίζω, which has the additional nuance of causing to become firmer, often in matters of conviction or commitment.<sup>11</sup> The Jerusalem decree helps to unite the churches, and Luke shows that they are healthy and strong in faith, conviction and commitment, which results in daily growth.

### 12.1.2 Team Ministry

In Lystra Paul recruits Timothy to join him in his missionary travels (16.1-3).<sup>12</sup> Timothy probably had been converted on one of Paul's two earlier missionary visits to Lystra (14.6-18,21-23).<sup>13</sup> Luke emphasizes that Timothy is a valuable co-worker, saying that he comes highly recommended (ἐμαρτυρεῖτο) from the brothers at Lystra and Iconium (16.2).<sup>14</sup>

Timothy's addition to Paul's travelling team is a milestone: for the first time, one of Paul's direct converts is joining him full-time in his missionary work. This is a mutually beneficial relationship; Timothy is an excellent Pauline co-worker, and a tireless assistant to the mission, and he receives significant personal mentoring and training along the way.<sup>15</sup>

This highlights another of Paul's strategic missionary distinctives: team. Paul almost never travels or ministers alone in Acts.<sup>16</sup> Over the course of three missionary journeys, Paul

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<sup>11</sup> BDAG, 943. Cf. Acts 3.7, where the lame man's ankles are strengthened (ἐστερεώθησαν) in this same way. In the LXX, cf. 1 Kgdms [Sam] 2.1: 'My heart exults (ἐστερεώθη – is strengthened and established) in the LORD.' Cf. Xen., Cyr., 8.8.8: 'from the wish to *harden* the body by labour and perspiration.' Στερεός, the root word, means firm, hard, or solid.

<sup>12</sup> Timothy would become one of the most important figures in the Pauline mission. He is mentioned in Acts 17.14-15; 18.5; 19.22; 20.4, and is acknowledged as Paul's 'fellow worker' (Rom 16.21), special delegate (1 Cor 4.17; 16.10; Phil 2.19; 1 Thes 3.2,6), and as one of the co-sponsors (co-writers?) of several of Paul's letters (2 Cor 1.1; Phil 1.1; Col 1.1; 1 Thes 1.1; 2 Thes 1.1; Philem.). Paul writes 1 and 2 Tim to Timothy, which tells us something of the fond filial relationship between Paul and his loyal helper. Johnson, *Acts*, 283.

<sup>13</sup> In 1 Cor 4.17 Paul calls Timothy his beloved (spiritual) child. 2 Tim 1.5 speaks of the conversion of his grandmother and mother.

<sup>14</sup> As noted in ch.3, this is another common use of μαρτυρέω, one of our missional words. Timothy may have been one of the disciples that stood around Paul's body after he had been stoned in Lystra (14.20).

<sup>15</sup> To travel with Paul is to observe his lifestyle and learn from his values and ministry practices. Timothy goes on to lead the Ephesian church for many years, and is one of Paul's most trusted associates (2 Tim 4.9-13).

<sup>16</sup> Possible exceptions: 17.14-34; 18.21,23. When Paul is alone, he is uncomfortable, as his 'command/order' (ἐντολήν, 17.15) that they bring Silas and Timothy to him as soon as possible shows.

travels with at least these thirteen specified co-workers: Barnabas (first journey), John Mark (13.4-13), Silas (second journey), Timothy (16.1; 17.14,15; 18.5; 19.22; 20.4), the author of Acts (three 'we' passages), Aquila and Priscilla (18.1-4,18-20), Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Tychicus, and Trophimas (19.29; 20.4).<sup>17</sup> Paul relies on these travelling companions for personal strength, support and encouragement.

Paul also depends on his companions for protection, as travel in the ancient world posed multiple dangers, such as attacks from bandits and pirates.<sup>18</sup> Much evidence of widespread banditry in the Roman Empire exists, largely in the form of tombstone inscriptions,<sup>19</sup> and the great lengths to which the Romans went to provide protection for those using the roads, building guard posts, watchtowers, advance stations, and other fortifications.<sup>20</sup> Augustine wrote, 'Remove justice and what are states but gangs of bandits on a large scale? And what are bandit gangs but kingdoms in miniature?'<sup>21</sup> A travelling group provided security from such hazards, and people rarely travelled alone for this reason.<sup>22</sup>

As Paul and his companions travel together, they form bonds of friendship, trust, and brotherly love, through such dramatic and intensive shared experience.<sup>23</sup> Working closely together gives Paul the strategic opportunity to personally mentor, train, and develop these young Christians, as well as discern their strengths, weaknesses, callings, and individual

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<sup>17</sup> There were likely many others who Paul travelled with, unnamed in Acts, e.g., Titus (2 Cor 2.13; 7.6; 2 Cor 8.23; Gal 2.3; Tit 1.4), Demas and Crescens (2 Tim 4.10), Artemas (Tit 3.12), and Erastus (2 Tim 4.20).

<sup>18</sup> The bandits/thieves (*λησταις*) in the story of the Good Samaritan are an example of this, Lk 10.30-37. Similarly, the many soldiers travelling on the ship with Paul to Rome (Acts 27) are not only meant to keep the prisoners in captivity, but also to protect the prisoners and the ship from pirate attacks.

<sup>19</sup> B. D. Shaw speaks of, 'inscriptions found on tombstones that commemorate men, women and children who were murdered by bandits. Although few in number, such inscriptions are found in almost all regions of the empire, including places close to Rome itself. The deaths were evidently a common enough occurrence to give rise to a formulaic expression found on most tombstones, a brief *interfectus a latronibus* ("killed by bandits")', 'Bandits in the Roman Empire', *Past and Present* 105 (1984): 3-52, citing 10; for pictures of inscriptions, 10-11.

<sup>20</sup> Though some of these were meant to repel enemy armies, they seem to also be solutions to low-level regional threats to security, such as bandits; Shaw, 'Bandits', 12.

<sup>21</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 4.4.

<sup>22</sup> Jesus nearly always travels with others in the Gospels, probably largely for this reason.

<sup>23</sup> They survive riots, beatings, imprisonment, storms, and sleepless nights together, along with many months spent together on ships, walking along roads, sitting around campfires, etc. This allows Paul an unparalleled opportunity to instill his distinctive values, vision and strategy into his companions, as well as develop life-long friendships. 2 Cor 11.23-27, with its catalogue of hardships, is a shared 'team experience'.

potential.<sup>24</sup> Teacher/pupil relationships develop, modelled after the Jewish rabbi/student relationship.<sup>25</sup> As Paul's 'disciples', many of these team members become leaders in the network of churches which Paul and his associates establish and oversee.<sup>26</sup> Paul's strategic emphasis on team ministry, mentoring, and leadership development creates personal bonds and commitments which would last a lifetime, and expands the trusted leadership base that Paul can draw upon within the emerging church-planting movement.<sup>27</sup>

## ***12.2 Into Europe – Philippi (16.6–40)***

Paul and his companions travel throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia (16.6). The text indicates that Paul had planned on heading directly across Galatia and into the province of Asia, and perhaps on to Ephesus, but the Spirit has other things in mind.

### ***12.2.1 Following the Guidance of the Holy Spirit***

They are 'kept (χωλυθέντες – forbidden) by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia' (16.6).<sup>28</sup> So they travel north, but this happens a second time: 'they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them' (οὐκ εἴασεν αὐτοὺς τὸ πνεῦμα Ἰησοῦ, 16.7).<sup>29</sup> The Holy Spirit is 'squeezing' Paul and his companions down a narrow path, by preventing them from going south into Asia, and north into Bithynia. 'The Spirit blocked

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<sup>24</sup> This parallels Jesus' approach, Mk 3.14: 'He appointed twelve, so that *they would be with him* and that he could send them out to preach.' He modeled this approach to mentoring, and the early church followed it.

<sup>25</sup> Jesus is often called 'Rabbi' (ραββί) in the Gospels: Mt 26.25,49; Mk 9.5; 11.21; 14.45; Jn 1.38 ('Rabbi, which translated means Teacher', διδάσκαλε); 1.49; 3.2,26; 4.31; 6.25; 9.2; 11.18. See, J. Neusner, 'The Phenomenon of the Rabbi in Late Antiquity', *Numen* 16 (1969): 1-20.

<sup>26</sup> Travelling, living, and working closely with Paul would have been a life-changing experience for these young Christians. E.g., Tychicus, Acts 20.4; Eph 6.21, 'the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord'; Col 4.7, 'beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord'; 2 Tim 4.12; Tit 3.12.

<sup>27</sup> E.g., Timothy, Titus, Silas/Silvanus, Tychicus, Trophimus, etc. Although Luke probably never assumed church leadership, he was a valuable co-worker of Paul's (Col 4.14; 2 Tim 4.11; Phlm 1.24), and he wrote his Gospel and Acts, which have undoubtedly had the greatest long-term impact.

<sup>28</sup> Paul or one of his associates may receive a prophetic word, or this could be an internal leading from the Holy Spirit, or there may be circumstances, such as a 'closed door', which make this leading clear.

<sup>29</sup> This is probably the same thing as v. 6. 'What these verses show is that Paul was not clear in advance of the beginning of this journey what direction God had in mind for him to go once he completed the circuit of the already founded churches in Syria, Cilicia, and southern Galatia. Paul would thus try various possibilities until divine guidance opened a door and showed him the way', Witherington, *Acts*, 478-79.

every direction sought by human initiative, and left only an opening to Europe.<sup>30</sup> They can only go west into Mysia, so they follow standard operating procedures and go to the port city of Troas, the nearest urban centre to which they are allowed to travel (16.8).<sup>31</sup>

The guidance they are seeking materializes in Troas, in the form of a supernatural vision (*δραμα*):<sup>32</sup> ‘A certain man from Macedonia (*ἄνθρωπος Μακεδών*)’ begs Paul, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us’ (*Διαβὰς εἰς Μακεδονίαν βοήθησον ἡμῖν*, 16.9).<sup>33</sup> Luke emphasizes that this is not based on human plans, but is a divine commissioning, as the Holy Spirit leads them in a new direction.<sup>34</sup> Another aspect of Paul’s strategy is to follow the Spirit’s guidance whenever possible. The Spirit may lead through relationships and social networks, or through roads and trade routes. However, the supernatural leadership of the Holy Spirit supersedes all else, and Paul is willing to abandon his travel plans if God intervenes.<sup>35</sup> This underscores Luke’s assumption that the Holy Spirit guides, empowers, and is in control of his mission, and for this reason missionaries should always follow the leadership of the Spirit.<sup>36</sup>

### 12.2.2 An Urban Centre

Paul and his companions sail to Samothrace and Neapolis,<sup>37</sup> which is the port of Philippi (16.11-12),<sup>38</sup> another strategic urban centre in which Paul ministers. It is a Roman *colonia*,<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 286.

<sup>31</sup> Troas was a centre of commerce, trade, and communication; C. J. Hemer, ‘Alexandria Troas’, *TynB* 26 (1975): 79-112. There was a Christian community established in Troas (2 Cor 2.12-13; 2 Tim 4.13; Acts 20.7-12). Paul may have founded this community (2 Cor 2.12-13). Cf. Witherington, *Acts*, 479.

<sup>32</sup> This vision could be a dream, as it comes to Paul at night. Dreams and visions are common in antiquity, and in the NT. Paul reports having divine revelations (he often calls them *ἀποκάλυψις*) in 2 Cor 12.1-7; Gal 1.12; 2.2; Eph 3.3, and other places. On visions (*δραμα*) in Acts, cf. 9.10-12; 10.3,17,19; 11.5; 12.9; 16.9-10; esp. 18.9. On related trances (*ἔκστασις*), cf. 3.10; 10.10-16; 11.5; 22.17. These are ‘normal’ occurrences in Acts.

<sup>33</sup> Scholars have proposed everything from this man being Luke, W. M. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1895): 202, to Alexander the Great, W. Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1955): 131-32. We only know he is Macedonian (‘come help us’).

<sup>34</sup> This parallels 13.4, Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2.195.

<sup>35</sup> This is a progressive revelation: God first tells them two places they are not to go, which ‘squeezes’ them towards the place they are to go. They are unsure of what the final destination is, and the answer does not come until they have traveled all the way to Troas, across the Aegean Sea from Macedonia.

<sup>36</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 480. Paul is always watching for God’s direction, but where God’s leadership is not abundantly clear, he goes to the places that ‘make the most sense’ intuitively, or where relationships or roads lead (such as Troas), following his *modus operandi* of travel and urban centres.

<sup>37</sup> From Troas to Neapolis was 156 miles, and Philippi was 10 miles further inland, Witherington, *Acts*, 488.

and its influence is widespread.<sup>40</sup> Luke calls it ‘the leading city of Macedonia’ (πρώτης μερίδος τῆς Μακεδονίας πόλις, 16.12).<sup>41</sup>

### 12.2.3 Cultural and Religious Points of Contact/Access

On the Sabbath they go to a ‘place of prayer’ (ἐνομιζέτο προσευχῆν) outside the city gate, find a group of Jewish women assembled there, and share the gospel with them (16.13).<sup>42</sup> Once again, Paul goes to spiritually open places, where he has a natural point of cultural and religious contact. There is likely no synagogue in Philippi, so this Jewish prayer gathering is his natural doorway in. He continues with his *modus operandi*: to Jews first.

### 12.2.4 People of Influence – Householder Evangelism

Paul meets Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira (16.14).<sup>43</sup> Lydia is portrayed in this passage as a person of significant social status and financial means. The Lord opens her heart to listen to the gospel and be converted, and she and her household are baptized (ὡς δὲ ἐβαπτίσθη καὶ ὁ οἶκος αὐτῆς, 16.15), which at least includes her household servants and any children. She invites Paul and his fellow travelers to come and stay in her home (εἰσελθόντες εἰς τὸν οἶκόν μου μένετε), extending a crucial invitation of hospitality. Paul and his companions stay in her home, training the new believers and assisting in the emerging

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<sup>38</sup> Upon entering Neapolis, they enter ‘Europe’, though this would not have meant much to them, as Macedonia and Asia were merely two provinces of the Roman Empire, closely related in language and character, Ramsay, *Paul the Traveller*, 199. On ‘Europe’, see Schneider, *Apostel.*, 2.204. Luke is consistently interested to show the gospel crossing ethnic and geographical boundaries in Acts.

<sup>39</sup> A *colonia* often originated as a settlement of Roman citizens in a conquered territory, to help subdue the local population. Then often it became a place where discharged soldiers gained land as their pension (true for Philippi). It enjoyed *libertas* (autonomous government), *immunitas* (from tribute and taxation), and *Ius Italicum* (considered to be a part of Italian soil, with a Roman administration, law, and judicial procedure). Barrett, *Acts*, 2.780. It was basically a microcosm of Rome itself. See Johnson, *Paul*, 74-76.

<sup>40</sup> Particularly in travel, communication, population, and cultural trends. Philippi was not a capital. Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia, and Amphipolis was the capital of the local district.

<sup>41</sup> Luke is probably referring to its ‘honour rating’ in that part of Macedonia. Luke may have also been from Philippi, as the first ‘we’ section begins here. Interestingly, Philippi also was famous for its medical school (Col 4.14; Phil 4.3). Philippi lay on the *Via Egnatia*, the main east-west road across Macedonia, connecting Rome with its eastern provinces, Witherington, *Acts*, 488-490.

<sup>42</sup> Longenecker, *Acts*, 460.

<sup>43</sup> We have looked in depth at Lydia in previous chapters.

outreach to the city, while continuing to reach out to the same strategic larger social network by going to the Jewish place of prayer (16.16).<sup>44</sup>

A growing church is born in Lydia's household, emphasized in 16.40, when Paul and Silas meet with 'the brothers' (τοὺς ἀδελφούς) in Lydia's house, and encourage them. Paul, an outsider, succeeds in establishing a base for evangelism in Philippi surprisingly quickly, and the Philippian church begins, all through Lydia's conversion. Luke's strategic missional instructions are plain: search for natural cultural and religious points of contact, where there will be most openness to the message; targets householders; and finally, look for influential leaders of status and means within larger social networks (such as the place of prayer).<sup>45</sup>

#### **Table 12.2 Lydia in Philippi – An Ideal Person of Influence**

- Lydia is a God-fearer (σεβομένη, 16.14b), so there is substantial cultural and religious common ground between her and Paul, which provides natural rapport and points of connection (16.13,14c).
- Lydia is a householder (οἶκος).<sup>46</sup> By reaching Lydia, Paul reaches into the power-centre of an entire household network, illustrated by her entire household being baptized with her (16.15).
- Lydia's friendship and social status provide the ideal social base for outreach into Philippi; her reputation and influence in the community provide Paul and his message vital social credibility (16.13,16).
- Lydia's house provides a physical base for mission in Philippi, and a home for the new church (16.15b,40).
- Lydia's wealth provides a financial base for outreach into Philippi (16.14a,40).

#### *12.2.5 Demonstrating God's Power*

In Philippi Paul casts the 'python' spirit out of a fortune-telling slave girl (16.16-18).<sup>47</sup> This demonstration of God's power backfires, and Paul and Silas are arrested (16.19-21),<sup>48</sup> stripped, flogged with rods (ῥαβδίζω), and locked in the inner cell of the local jail, with stocks around their feet (16.22-24).<sup>49</sup> Note their response – 'about midnight Paul and Silas were

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<sup>44</sup> They must have stayed for at least a week, possibly much longer, as the next episode is again on their way to the place of prayer. Luke is not specific about the time spent building up and training this new congregation.

<sup>45</sup> Befriending one of the heads of a social network is the easiest way to penetrate a new network as an outsider. A householder almost always fit this description in the ancient world.

<sup>46</sup> See the previous part for a detailed examination of households and householders in the Christian mission.

<sup>47</sup> For more details of this slave girl, the oracle at Delphi, and the entire incident, see Fontenrose, *Delphic Oracle*; Barrett, *Acts*, 2.784-90; Witherington, *Acts*, 493-96. Rom 15.18-19 and 2 Cor 12.12 also indicate that Paul performed such miracles.

<sup>48</sup> Miracles do not always achieve their desired end, as at Lystra, when the crowds worship Paul and Barnabas as gods (14.8-18). Paul's mission often damages the fortunes of pagan worshippers and craftsmen, as will also be the case in Ephesus with the silversmiths who make shrines of Artemis (19.23-41).

<sup>49</sup> Paul refers to this, 1 Thes 2.2; 2 Cor 11.25 (was beaten by these Roman rods, ῥαβδίζω, three times).

praying and singing hymns of worship to God' (προσευκόμενοι ὕμνουσιν τὸν θεόν, 16.25). Once again, their willingness to suffer advances the mission.

Suddenly there is a violent earthquake (σεισμὸς ἐγένετο μέγας), which shakes the prison's foundations and causes the prison doors to fly open and the chains to come loose (16.26).<sup>50</sup> This is another example of the supernatural confirmation of the validity of Paul's message (cf. 2 Cor 12.12). The jailer interprets the earthquake this way, for he rushes in and cries out, 'What must I do to be saved?' (τί με δεῖ ποιεῖν ἵνα σωθῶ;, 16.30). The miraculous validation of the message is central to its successful advancement in Acts.

### 12.2.6 Household Conversion

Paul and Silas do not escape, but preach to the traumatised jailer, who is a householder:

'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your *household*' (πίστευσον ἐπὶ τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν καὶ σωθήσῃ σὺ καὶ ὁ οἶκός σου, 16.31).<sup>51</sup> This is the οἶκος formula, and Luke emphasizes it two further times by saying that they, 'spoke the word of the Lord to him (ἐλάλησαν αὐτῷ τὸν λόγον τοῦ Κυρίου) together with all who were in his *house*' (πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ αὐτοῦ, 16.32), and 'he and his entire *family* were baptized' (ἐβαπτίσθη αὐτὸς καὶ οἱ αὐτοῦ πάντες, 16.33). The stories of Lydia (16.15) and Cornelius (11.14) are echoed in this episode.<sup>52</sup> By reaching a householder, Paul again reaches an entire household with the gospel, and establishes another base for further missional expansion.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Earthquakes were often interpreted as the visitation of a god to an area. Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphosis*, 9.782-783: 'The goddess seemed to make the altar tremble (it did tremble), and the doors of the temple shook, her horns, shaped like the moon's crescents, shone, and the sistrum rattled loudly'; 15.669-679: 'the golden god, in the likeness of a serpent with a tall crest, gave out a hiss...and by his coming, rocked the statue, the doors, the marble pavement, and the gilded roof'; Lucian, *Lover of Lies*, 22: 'presently there was an earthquake; I heard a voice like a thunderclap, and saw a terrible woman approaching...Her lower extremities were those of a dragon; but the upper half was like Medusa.'

<sup>51</sup> This confirms Paul's habit – he preaches to everyone, everywhere, even when set free by an earthquake.

<sup>52</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 301.

<sup>53</sup> For analysis of the background and sources for the entire Philippian episode in Acts 16, see Jervell, *Apostel.*, 428-30; Weiser, *Apostel.*, 2.421-31.



### 12.2.7 Strengthening the New Church

When the magistrates realize that Paul and Silas are Roman citizens, they request that they leave Philippi (16.35-39).<sup>54</sup> However, Paul and Silas do not leave immediately, but return to Lydia's house, where there is now a young and growing church. 'Lydia's significance was not confined to her being a disciple or hostess to travelling disciples. Luke wishes us to understand that what began as a lodging for missionaries, became home of the embryonic church in Philippi.'<sup>55</sup> They meet 'the brothers' (τοὺς ἀδελφούς), and encourage them (παρεκάλεσαν, 16.40). Παρακαλέω indicates encouragement, exhortation, and comfort.<sup>56</sup> Paul's priority of strengthening and encouraging newly formed communities is apparent as he pauses to establish the church he has only recently founded.

### 12.2.8 Multiple Missional Strategies

The Philippian episode is a Lukan master-class in missional strategy. Luke shows how Paul effectively plants a Christian church in a new city, where he has no existing attachments, and where there are very few Jews. Once again, Paul establishes the first small cells of a local church in an influential city, trains them for a time, and then leaves fairly quickly.<sup>57</sup>

#### **Table 12.3 Missional Strategies in the Birth of the Philippian Church (Acts 16.12-40)**

- *Strategic points of contact* – the place of prayer (16.13-14).
- *Social networks* – the place of prayer, Lydia and the jailer's household (16.13,15,31-34).
- *Householder evangelism* – Lydia, the jailer (16.15,31-34).
- *People of influence, status, and means* – Lydia, the jailer (16.14,33-34).
- *Continual preaching* – at the place of prayer, in the jail (16.13,28-32).
- *Willingness to suffer* – stripped, flogged, locked in the inner jail with stocks (16.22-24).
- *A lifestyle of prayer, worship and personal devotion* – even in jail (16.25).
- *Supernatural confirmation of the Word* – exorcism, miraculous release from jail (16.18,26-27).
- *Intentional strengthening and encouragement* – the church at Lydia's house (16.40).

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<sup>54</sup> Beatings were illegal for citizens in a Roman colony, Garnsey, *Social Status*, 268.

<sup>55</sup> Witherington, *Women*, 149.

<sup>56</sup> Παρακαλέω is a stock word for ministering to, building up, and strengthening the newly founded churches in Acts, which happens often: Barnabas at Antioch (11.23), Paul and Barnabas to the churches from the first journey (14.22), Judas and Silas at Antioch (15.32), and Paul throughout Macedonia (20.2).

<sup>57</sup> Paul later writes back to this church, 'the letter of joy' (see Phil 1.3-8, Paul's affection for this congregation).

## 12.3 Thessalonica and Berea (17.1-14)

### 12.3.1 Roads and Cities

After leaving Philippi, Paul and his companions travel along the *Via Egnatia* to Thessalonica, a journey of at least 100 miles (17.1). The travelling missionaries take the main paved Roman roads through this area. Thessalonica is the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia.<sup>58</sup> Paul continues to target urban centres on primary roads in his mission work.

### 12.3.2 Jews and God-Fearers

Thessalonica has a large Jewish Diaspora population, and Paul, ‘as was his custom (κατὰ δὲ τὸ εἰωθὸς τῷ Παύλῳ - as was normal), went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days reasoned (διελέξατο) with them from the Scriptures (γραφῶν), explaining (διανοίγων) and proving (παραπιθέμενος) that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead’ (17.2-3).<sup>59</sup> Paul is again targeting a potentially receptive people group, with whom he has common ground, and preaching a message of relevance to his hearers, built upon the authority of the Hebrew Scriptures. The initial response is positive: some Jews, a ‘large number of God-fearing Greeks’ (σεβομένων Ἑλλήνων πλῆθος πολὺ), and ‘not a few prominent women’ (γυναικῶν τε τῶν πρώτων οὐκ ὀλίγαι) join in (προσεκλήρωθησαν) with Paul and Silas (17.4).

### 12.3.3 Persecution and Households

The Jews grow jealous, start a riot (ἐθροῦβουν), and go to the house of Jason (οἰκία Ἰάσονος, a householder), assuming Paul and Silas are staying with him (17.5).<sup>60</sup> The mob drags Jason and ‘some other brothers’ (τινας ἀδελφούς) before the city officials to accuse them (17.6-9).<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> R. Stark estimates it had a population of 35,000 around CE 100. Stark also has a summary of the history and character of the city, *Cities of God*, 51-52; cf. Johnson, *Paul*, 76-80.

<sup>59</sup> These are three of the missional words identified in ch. 3, referring to the process of opening the hearer's mind, and presenting proofs in rhetorical format. Cf. D. W. Kemmler, *Faith and Human Reason: A Study of Paul's Method of Preaching as Illustrated by 1-2 Thessalonians and Acts 17.2-4* (Leiden: Brill, 1975): 38-39.

<sup>60</sup> This may be the Jason of Rom 16.21, a fellow worker of Paul; Barrett, *Acts*, 2.813.

<sup>61</sup> ‘Luke evidently thinks it possible that three Sabbaths might suffice to gather men into the new brotherhood; having been nurtured in the synagogue they would probably need little instruction beyond the simple identification of the Messiah with Jesus’, Barrett, *Acts*, 2.814.

These are indications of a small Thessalonian house church, already formed around the οἶκος of Jason: 'As in the case of Lydia's, we are to picture a house-church already in existence.'<sup>62</sup>

Paul and Silas evade capture, and are sent to Berea that night, under the cover of darkness.<sup>63</sup>

#### 12.3.4 Strategic Patterns in Thessalonica

The Thessalonica story reveals many familiar strategic patterns.

#### **Table 12.4 Missional Patterns in the Birth of the Thessalonian Church (Acts 17.1-10)**

- Paul goes to the Jews and the God-fearers (17.1-2).
- Paul targets people of prominence within those social networks, who give him credibility in the community and the material support and resources his mission requires (17.4).
- Paul preaches relevantly (17.3).
- Paul gathers a core of new Christian converts into an embryonic house church at a householder's house (Jason), for discipleship and training in faith and mission (17.5-6).
- Paul expects persecution, and is prepared to depart quickly when it comes (17.5-8).
- Paul leaves the Thessalonian church to carry on, trusting that the foundations he has laid will enable them to impact their city and the surrounding regions with the good news (17.10).

That there is already a developed congregation of believers at Paul's departure is underscored by the two mentions of 'the brothers' in Thessalonica, particularly when they send Paul and Silas off to Berea (17.6,10).<sup>64</sup> This church goes on to flourish and grow into one of the significant early churches in the region. Paul visits again on his third journey (20.4), confirming his pattern of strengthening and following-up, and writes two letters to them, addressing many of the problems and conflicts that are inevitable in a new community.<sup>65</sup>

#### 12.3.5 Paul's Missional Strategies in Berea

Paul and Silas flee to Berea, a city not on the *Via Egnatia*, but fifty miles southwest of Thessalonica by means of a lesser road.<sup>66</sup> Berea is the most significant city in its district of Bottiaea, though smaller than Philippi or Thessalonica.<sup>67</sup> It also has a synagogue, which Paul

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<sup>62</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 306.

<sup>63</sup> Paul has no problem fleeing and escaping in a rapid and rather inglorious way, as he also does in Damascus (9.23-25), Jerusalem (9.30), Pisidian Antioch (13.50-51), and Lystra (14.20). It is also interesting to note how much of the action in Acts takes place at night (5.19; 9.25; 12.6; 16.33). Johnson, *Acts*, 307.

<sup>64</sup> This second reference should be understood as the newly founded Christian community as a whole, acting in defence and protection of the missionaries.

<sup>65</sup> 'To deal with these problems [of new communities], Paul had to write a lucid primer of basic Christianity as he understood it, thereby providing a priceless legacy to all subsequent generations', Stark, *Cities of God*, 52.

<sup>66</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 509. Cicero says Berea is off the beaten path, *In Pisonem*, 36.89.

<sup>67</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, 2.817.

and Silas visit immediately (17.10). It is doubtful that Paul planned on visiting Berea, but he perseveres in his mission.<sup>68</sup> Persecution again affects Paul's mission, but he seems to see this as God's providence, and carries on with the evangelistic task he has been given.

The Berean Jews are of more noble character (εὐγενέστεροι) than the Thessalonians, and receive Paul's preaching with interest (17.10-11). Many believe, including a number of prominent women (γυναικῶν τῶν εὐσχημόνων) and men (17.12).<sup>69</sup> The term εὐσχημόνων technically means 'decent' or 'proper', but Luke uses it here to designate social standing, in contrast to the 'rabble' at Thessalonica.<sup>70</sup> Again, Paul targets people of prominence within his most accessible social network, the local synagogue. These new converts provide stability as well as vital resources for the fledgling Berean church.

The Thessalonian Jews hear of Paul's activity in Berea, and go there to agitate the crowds (17.13). An established core of believers is there by the time Paul leaves, because 'the brothers' (ἀδελφοί) send Paul to Athens, and multiple people escort him there (οἱ δὲ καθιστάνοντες, 17.14-15).<sup>71</sup> Paul may feel that the Berean church is not yet strong enough, so he leaves Silas and Timothy behind, presumably to strengthen the church and to help it endure the crisis of persecution.<sup>72</sup> Paul's first thought is always for the welfare and strengthening of the new churches, even when this requires personal sacrifice on his part.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Paul may have planned on continuing along the *Via Egnatia* all the way to Rome. Cf. Rom 1.13; 15.22-24. Paul is clear that he has wanted to visit Rome, but has been prevented from doing so.

<sup>69</sup> On targeting prominent women, cf. E. A. Castelli, 'Gender, Theory and the Rise of Christianity: A Response to Rodney Stark', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (1998): 227-57; Osiek & MacDonald, *A Woman's Place*. This can also be seen in Judaism, Josephus, *War*, 2.560; *Ant.*, 18.81-84: 'Fulvia, a woman of great dignity and one that had embraced the Jewish religion'; 20.35: 'Ananias got among the women that belonged to the king, and taught them to worship God according to the Jewish religion. He, moreover, by their means, became known to Izates, and persuaded him, in like manner, to embrace that religion'. On female conversion to Judaism, T. Ilan, *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine: An Inquiry into Image and Status* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995): 211-14.

<sup>70</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 308.

<sup>71</sup> 'The brothers' is Luke's stock term for these new congregations. The hint of 'the sea' (θάλασσαν, 17.14) points to Paul travelling by boat. This takes him into a new political jurisdiction, safe from his violent pursuers.

<sup>72</sup> Paul visits Berea at least two other times on his next missionary journey (20.1-3). The only further mention of Berea is Sopater of Berea, a travelling companion of Paul (20.4). This may be the same person as Sosipater (Rom 16.21), who is mentioned with Jason, probably the one from nearby Thessalonica (Acts 17.5).

<sup>73</sup> This sacrifice is shown in his 'command' for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible (17.15).

## 12.4 Athens (17.15-34)

After leaving Berea, Paul comes alone to Athens,<sup>74</sup> where he waits for Silas and Timothy to rejoin him. While he is in Athens, he is greatly distressed (*παρωξύνετο* – a strong anger or irritation) by all the idols he sees (17.16).<sup>75</sup> Paul reasons in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as is his common practice. However, he also reasons day by day in the marketplace with anyone who happens to be there (17.17). Paul's missional strategy takes him first to the Jews, yet he proclaims the Word everywhere, to anyone who will listen. A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers (*τῶν Ἐπικουρείων καὶ τῶν Στωϊκῶν φιλοσόφων*) debate with him, take him to the Areopagus (*Ἀρειοῦ Πιάγου*), and ask him to explain his new teaching (17.18-19).<sup>76</sup> Paul then stands up and delivers one of the most famous and studied evangelistic messages in Scripture.<sup>77</sup>

### 12.4.1 A Relevant and Authoritative Message

This educated, philosophical, pagan and Gentile audience with no connection to Judaism is very different for Paul. But as always, he presents his arguments in this speech in a way that is uniquely relevant and suited to his hearers, connecting purposefully with his audience:<sup>78</sup>

Throughout the speech, Luke or Paul is using various somewhat familiar notions to pass judgment on and attack idols and the idolatry involved in polytheism. In other words, what we see here is not an attempt to meet pagans halfway, but rather *a use of points of contact, familiar ideas and terms, in order to make a proclamation of monotheism in its Christian form...* This subtle but unwavering approach comports with Paul's commitment to the [Jerusalem] decree, the essence of which was to make sure Gentiles are led away from idolatry and immorality.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Another city of significance and history which Paul visits, Athens is a city of great learning, and a show-case for the grandeur of Greek culture. Witherington, *Acts*, 513; cf. Johnson, *Paul*, 85-93.

<sup>75</sup> In the LXX *παρωξύνετο* refers to God's extreme anger at the idolatry of his chosen people, e.g., Deut 9.18; Ps 106.29; Isa 65.3; Hos 8.5. Witherington, *Acts*, 512.

<sup>76</sup> In this context, *ἐπιλαμβάνομαι* (apprehend) implies formal or informal arrest; Pesch, *Apostel.*, 2.134-35.

<sup>77</sup> This passage has attracted more scholarly attention than any other passage in Acts. For the many significant works, cf. Bruce, *Acts*, 379-80; Witherington, *Acts*, 511; Barrett, *Acts*, 2.823-24; Johnson, *Acts*, 311-21.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Acts 14.15-17, in a similar setting in Lystra. Tannehill points out that Luke highlights three kinds of Pauline speeches in Acts: 'a mission speech to Jews (13.16-41), a mission speech to Gentiles (17.22-33), and a farewell speech to the elders of the Ephesian church (20.18-35)', *Narrative Unity*, 2.210.

<sup>79</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 518-519.

Paul begins by calling the Athenians ‘religious’ (δεισιδαιμονεστέρους), a phrase which has an ambiguous double meaning, meaning either pious or superstitious (17.22).<sup>80</sup> He then refers to an altar ‘to an unknown God’ (ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ), and declares that he intends to tell them who this god is (17.23).<sup>81</sup> He references something familiar to them, speaking a ‘language’ which they can grasp. Paul then argues from natural theology, that there is a Creator who created all things and all peoples (17.24-26). ‘God did this so that people would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us’ (17.27). Then Paul relates this to poetry familiar to the Athenians: a quote from the Cretan poet Epimenides,<sup>82</sup> and from the Sicilian poet Aratus (17.28).<sup>83</sup> Paul always cites an authority recognized by his audience to support his argument. In the synagogues, Paul quotes the Hebrew Scriptures, but here his audience would not know these scriptures, so Paul never mentions them. Persuasive arguments only work within the hearers’ realm of familiarity, so Paul builds his argument in a way that is authoritative to the Athenians.

Paul ends with a declaration of Jesus, and a call to repentance and belief in him (17.29-31). Luke records three different responses: some reject the message and ‘sneer’ (ἐχλεύαζον), some procrastinate by saying, ‘we want to hear you again on this subject’ (this may be sincere), and ‘others join him and believe’ (τινὲς δὲ ἄνδρες κολληθέντες αὐτῷ ἐπίστευσαν, 17.32-34). Among those who believe are Dionysius the Areopagite,<sup>84</sup> a member

<sup>80</sup> Paul hopes to gain a hearing by being complimentary, yet actually means the negative sense, that they are overly superstitious, as evidenced by the next verse (17.23; cf. 25.19).

<sup>81</sup> See Witherington, *Acts*, 520-23 for a summary of the scholarly debate about this particular altar.

<sup>82</sup> Epimenides (c. 600 BCE), *Cretica*: ‘In him we live and move and have our being.’ There is another quote from this same poem in Tit 1.12. The original poem no longer exists, though there are other similar assertions about natural revelation, e.g., Dio Chrysostom, *Olympic Oration*, 12.28.

<sup>83</sup> Aratus (c. 315-240 BCE), *Phaenomena*, 5.1: ‘From Zeus let us begin; him do we mortals never leave unnamed; full of Zeus are all the streets and all the market-places of men; full is the sea and the heavens thereof; always we all have need of Zeus. *For we are also his offspring*; and he in his kindness unto men giveth favourable signs and wakeneth the people to work, reminding them of livelihood...’ Aratus is a Sicilian, as is Paul. Paul also quotes Greek poetry (Menander, *Thais*) in 1 Cor 15.33.

<sup>84</sup> Eusebius, *HE*, 3.4.11; 4.23.3, claims that Dionysius became the first bishop of Athens. Witherington, *Acts*, 532. The designation Ἀρεοπαγίτης suggests that Dionysius is a member of the Athenian council, and therefore of high social rank. Cf. Arist., *Politics*, 1273B-1274A. Johnson, *Acts*, 318.

of the council before which Paul has just spoken, and certainly a householder of some social standing in Athens, who would have acted as a person of peace (Lk 10.5-7) for the church in Athens, and a woman named Damaris.<sup>85</sup> The 'others with them' (ἄλλοι σὺν αὐτοῖς) who are converted may be their extended family, or other observers.<sup>86</sup>

Some believe that no Christian community forms at Athens at this time.<sup>87</sup> However, Luke's language hints at the beginnings of a house church (17.34): 'Luke typically notes the success that leads to the foundation of a community. In this case, the success is obviously modest.'<sup>88</sup> It was a positive reception, in that Athens is one of the only places on this second journey where Paul is not threatened with violence.<sup>89</sup>

## ***12.5 Corinth (18.1-18)***

### ***12.5.1 Cities and Trade Routes***

In Corinth (18.1), Paul continues 'his [strategic] policy of sharing the gospel in major cities in the Empire, including especially Roman colony cities.'<sup>90</sup> Marshall explains that, 'Corinth and Ephesus were the two most important cities visited by Paul in the course of his missionary work, and he stayed in each for a considerable period in order to establish churches which would then evangelize the surrounding areas.'<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Damaris may be a foreign woman, an educated woman who would serve as a companion of an Athenian at a public occasion, or even a God-fearer who had heard Paul at the synagogue (17.17). Hemer, *Acts*, 232.

<sup>86</sup> There would have been a larger audience than simply the Areopagus listening to Luke's speech. Ramsay, *Paul the Traveller*, 248. These 'others' would be enough to form a small house church in Dionysius' home.

<sup>87</sup> 1 Cor 16.15 refers to the household of Stephanas of Corinth as the first converts in Achaia (Greece). This may mean the first house church in Achaia, or it may not be literal. Witherington, *Acts*, 533.

<sup>88</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 318.

<sup>89</sup> Paul may renounce this intellectual approach, or decide to modify it, when he moves on to Corinth. Cf. 1 Cor 2.1-5: 'I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom...I determined to know nothing except Jesus Christ, and him crucified...my message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.' This approach, also spelled out in 1 Cor 1.22-25, appears to be Paul's new methodology, after a less fruitful missional effort in Athens than at most other destinations. Cf. Acts 18.9-10.

<sup>90</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 535. This is one of the missional strategies highlighted in this part.

<sup>91</sup> Marshall, *Acts*, 291. Luke probably did not have access to the Corinthian letters when he wrote Acts, for he fails to mention by name Stephanas and his household, Fortunatus, Achaiucus, and Gaius (1 Cor 1.14-16; 16.17). However, there are still many points of convergence, seven of which Witherington itemizes, *Acts*, 537.

When Paul arrives in Corinth in the early 50s, it is the largest, most prosperous city in Greece.<sup>92</sup> Aphrodite is the patron goddess of the city, and Greek Corinth is known for its high levels of immorality.<sup>93</sup> However, it provides the ideal place in Greece for making contacts with many different kinds of people,<sup>94</sup> and for founding a new religious group. Paul spends at least eighteen months in Corinth, establishing a congregation of both Jews and Gentiles (18.11).

#### 12.5.2 Ministry Partnerships, Households, and Social Networks

In Corinth Paul becomes friends with a Christian couple named Priscilla and Aquila, who have recently arrived from Rome (18.2).<sup>95</sup> He shares their occupation as a tentmaker (*σχοποιοί*, or leather worker), living and working with them initially, while he reasons (*διελέγετο*) in the synagogue every Sabbath (18.3-4).<sup>96</sup> Luke is hinting at another vital kind of social network in the ancient world, the workplace network: ‘Associations and guilds formed on the basis of shared crafts were a common feature of the Hellenistic world; the partnership of Aquila, Priscilla, and Paul appears as an informal example.’<sup>97</sup> Many of Paul’s initial Corinthian contacts likely come from Priscilla and Aquila’s professional networks.<sup>98</sup>

When Silas and Timothy arrive from Macedonia, Paul devotes himself to full-time evangelistic proclamation (*διαμαρτυρούμενος*) in Corinth (18.5). However, the Jews oppose him, so Paul leaves the synagogue, and goes next door to Titius Justus’ house, a God-fearer’s

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<sup>92</sup> Corinth had ports on either side of the Isthmus of Corinth, which gave it a commercial advantage because shippers could save a lot of time by transferring their cargo overland from one port to the other, Stark, *Cities of God*, 50. See Johnson, *Paul*, 94-105, for more on Corinth.

<sup>93</sup> ‘A brawling seaport...being notorious for its blatant immorality. Much of its population was transitory – sailors, freebooters, adventurers, swindlers of every sort’, H. T. Frank, *Discovering the Biblical World*, rev. ed. (Maplewood: Hammond, 1988): 229. Roman Corinth did not have the same high levels of immorality, A. C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), esp. 447-53.

<sup>94</sup> Not least because it chiefly hosted the Isthmian games every two year, which attracted foreign travelers from all over the Empire. Witherington, *Acts*, 538.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. 18.18,26; Rom 16.3; 2 Tim 4.19. This couple is always mentioned together in the NT. They must have been welcome companions for Paul after a lonely period of travel and ministry in Athens.

<sup>96</sup> Corinth had a large and long-established Jewish colony which added to its extensive religious diversity.

<sup>97</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 322.

<sup>98</sup> ‘[The gospel travels] along the natural networks of relationship in each city and between cities. The families and houses of certain individuals seem to have been the starting points, and connections of work and trade seem to have been important’, Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 28.



(σεβομένου τὸν θεόν) who has recently converted (18.6-7). ‘As in the case of Lydia (16.15), a centre for the new community is found in the household of one who was a God-fearer.’<sup>99</sup>

Soon Crispus, the synagogue ruler (ἀρχισυνάγωγος) converts, along with his entire household (σὺν ὄλω τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ, 18.8a).<sup>100</sup> This is another οἶκος formula, and another instance of intentional householder missional strategy targeting Jews and God-fearers in Acts.

The conversion of a synagogue ruler is a notable achievement for Paul, and has ramifications in the larger Corinthian community. When ‘many other Corinthians heard’ (πολλοὶ τῶν Κορινθίων ἀκούοντες) about Crispus’ conversion, they ‘believed and were baptized’ (ἐπίστευον καὶ ἐβαπτίζοντο) as well, following his leadership (18.8b).<sup>101</sup> As a householder, his household would follow him, and this is explicit in the text, but as a synagogue ruler, he would also have influence within a more widespread network of relationships. Because they hear about his experience, Crispus’ household *and* wider social network follow his lead in converting to Christianity, which shows the power and potential of social networks. By reaching a person of influence, Paul reaches many others as well.<sup>102</sup>

### 12.5.3 A Reassuring Vision and the Foundations for Regional Mission

Paul has a vision (ὄραμα) of Christ in Corinth, inspiring him to stay and finish the work there: ‘Do not be afraid (μὴ φοβοῦ), go on speaking (λάλει), and do not be silent (μὴ σιωπήσης); for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in

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<sup>99</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 323.

<sup>100</sup> 1 Cor 1.14-16 confirms his baptism.

<sup>101</sup> Their hearing could refer to Paul’s preaching, but the text indicates that it refers to hearing about the conversion of Crispus. Regardless, Crispus’ conversion has a clear impact on the growth of the community.

<sup>102</sup> The story of Crispus’ social network, illustrates a dynamic which Meeks explains: ‘To be part of a household was to be part of a larger network of relations... Within the household, a vertical but not quite uni-linear chain connected unequal roles, from slave to paterfamilias, in the most intimate strand, but also included bonds between client and patron and a number of analogous but less formal relations of protection and subordination. Between this household and others there were links of kinship and of friendship, which also often entailed obligations and expectations. Both along and between these lines there were often strong ties of feeling and voluntary loyalty... this came closest to feelings of kinship. It is apparent that such feelings and attitudes could be expressed in various ways, including common religious practices’, *Urban Christians*, 30.

this city' (διότι λαός ἐστὶ μοι πολὺς ἐν τῇ πόλει ταύτῃ, 18.9-10).<sup>103</sup> Jesus wants Paul to stay, where in the past he has fled from impending danger (9.23-25,30; 13.50-51; 14.20). Christ's declaration that he has many people in Corinth highlights another function of social networks: they are also for protection.<sup>104</sup> Jesus offers Paul the reassurance that there are many people in the city who will be available to protect and defend him if needed.<sup>105</sup>

This vision gives Paul strength and stamina, and he stays in Corinth for a total of eighteen months, 'teaching the word of God among them' (διδάσκων ἐν αὐτοῖς τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ, 18.11).<sup>106</sup> Διδάσκω implies that during this time Paul lays crucial foundations, and develops the Corinthian church into a place of maturity where it is equipped to impact its surrounding area. Paul also probably uses this time to partner with the Corinthians in taking the gospel to the neighbouring districts of Achaea.<sup>107</sup> Paul's goal is to establish a nucleus of Christ-followers, and then train them to evangelistically impact their surrounding regions. The length of his stay in Corinth allows Paul to be effective in this missional strategy.

The predicted persecution materializes, and Paul is brought into court (18.12-13). However, Paul is released, and the crowd turns on another synagogue ruler, Sosthenes (Σωσθένην τὸν ἀρχισυναγωγόν), and beats him (18.14-17).<sup>108</sup> Paul stays in Corinth for many more days (προσμείνας ἡμέρας ἰκανάς), presumably continuing in evangelism, teaching Christian foundations, training emerging leaders, discipling new Christians, and equipping the Corinthian church to make an impact on its city and wider Achaean region (18.18).

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<sup>103</sup> Another significant *δραμα*. Cf. 1 Cor 2.3: 'I came to you in weakness and fear and much trembling.'

<sup>104</sup> Protection is a key role of a social network in Acts: the Derbe disciples surround and protect Paul when he is stoned (14.20); the Thessalonians protect Paul from attacks (17.10); the Bereans escort Paul to Athens (17.15).

<sup>105</sup> This promise could be understood as an evangelistic promise: 'I still have many people who will be saved in this city' (so Johnson, *Acts*, 324, most other commentators). However, given that it directly modifies the statement about Paul's physical safety, protection is a better interpretation of Christ's intention. Jesus could be saying that a great many people will be saved, and they will be the ones available to protect Paul.

<sup>106</sup> This is the longest he has stayed in any one place up to this point.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. 2 Cor 1.1, Paul includes 'Achaea' in his recipients, indicating that it was circulated throughout the area.

<sup>108</sup> They may have beat Sosthenes because he was perceived to be a Christian sympathizer. Sosthenes likely converts to the faith, and has to flee, so leaves town with Paul, and is mentioned later in 1 Cor 1.1 as helping to write to the Corinthians. This would mean that Paul converts two synagogue rulers in Corinth (18.8,17).

## ***12.6 Return to Antioch (18.19-23a)***

While returning to Syria, Paul sails to Ephesus with Priscilla and Aquila (18.19a).

### ***12.6.1 Laying Foundations for the Next Missionary Journey***

Paul lays the groundwork for future missionary work in Ephesus by visiting the synagogue in Ephesus to ‘reason with the Jews’ (διελέξατο τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις, 18.19b). This underscores Paul’s commitment to evangelize at every possible opportunity. It is likely that he has a brief window of time while waiting for his ship to leave for the Jerusalem area, and even at the end of a long and exhausting trip, Paul is quick to pursue evangelistic outreach in this new city.

Paul has a positive initial response in the synagogue, and is asked to return. He declines, but promises that he will return later, if God allows him to (18.20-21). This favourable reaction encourages Paul that the Jewish Diaspora in Ephesus is relatively open to the gospel, and convinces Paul that he has found another urban centre in which to establish a reproducing church, setting the stage for what is to come in the third missionary journey. Paul also leaves Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus, likely to help establish contacts and prepare for future outreach in the city, though they surely carry out business there as well.<sup>109</sup>

### ***12.6.2 Returning Home for Accountability, Rest and Relationships***

After landing in Caesarea, and visiting the ‘mother-church’ in Jerusalem, Paul returns home to Antioch (18.22), as he did at the end of his previous missionary journey (14.26-28). Paul takes accountability seriously, and once again gives his sending church an account of his journeys, and all that God has done in the last few years that he has been away. They have played a direct role in all of Paul’s dramatic exploits, through sending him out and praying for him in his absence (15.40). Luke emphasizes that Paul is accountable, and wants to keep in close contact with the church’s old centres, in Jerusalem and Caesarea, but esp. in Antioch: ‘Paul is not a loner, founding a separate, Pauline church, but a major figure in the one mission

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<sup>109</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 558. Priscilla and Aquila get to know Josephus in Ephesus, and help to mentor him.

which began in Jerusalem and was effectively continued from Antioch... [While in] Jerusalem he simply greets the church...in Antioch he spends some time (18.22-23). The stay in Antioch appropriately rounds off a missionary journey that began there (15.35-41).<sup>110</sup>

Luke says that Paul ‘spent some time’ at home in Antioch (ποιήσας χρόνον τινά, 18.23a). It is important for Paul to rest, and to be refreshed and rejuvenated after a long and exhausting journey, full of danger, opposition, and stress. This is another aspect of Paul’s comprehensive missional strategy, according to Luke.

It is also imperative for Paul to re-connect with his home-base, and with core relationships there, for a lot has doubtlessly transpired and changed in his absence.<sup>111</sup> These long-term, supportive relationships are essential to Paul’s recovery and personal stability.

### *12.6.3 The Vital Role of the Church at Antioch*

Luke emphasizes the strategic importance of the church at Antioch to the Pauline mission. It functions as a ‘home-base’ for Paul, a point to be sent out from and to return to. As Johnson explains, ‘despite the special side-trip to greet the Jerusalem Church, it is obvious that Antioch, which had sponsored him as an apostle in the first place, remains Paul’s “home community,” and it is there he consistently spends the most time (11.26-30; 13.1-3; 14.26-28; 15.30-35 [18.22-23]).’<sup>112</sup> Paul relies on this spiritual community at Antioch for strength and personal refreshment. For an itinerant missionary like Paul, having a home is an emotional and psychological priority, which provides roots to an otherwise transient lifestyle.

In Acts, the Pauline mission would have never happened were it not for this church at Antioch. They sent him out, and they continue to receive him back, help him recover, and then send him out again. The Pauline mission emerges directly out of this Antiochene community (13.1-3). Luke portrays the Antioch church as a healthy, well-resourced and

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<sup>110</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2.230.

<sup>111</sup> He may have had to ‘straighten out tangled relations with the church’ as well, Barrett, *Acts*, 2.881; cf. Gal 2.11-14.

<sup>112</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 331.

expansive local congregation (11.20-30), which provides the longevity and stability which Paul requires to endure the turbulence of his missionary adventures. This influential church at Antioch may also provide social contacts with people in Paul's destination cities.<sup>113</sup>

Luke encourages missionaries to emulate Paul, and churches to imitate Antioch. His message is clear: 'Pauls' do not emerge without 'Antiochs'. If the next generation of radical missionaries is to emerge in Luke's day, then the local churches of his day must emulate this church at Antioch, by becoming communities infused with the power of the Holy Spirit, capable of developing, sending out, and supporting their own international missionaries.<sup>114</sup> Such congregations provide the strength and support to sustain church-planting movements.

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<sup>113</sup> Through links of trade, travel, kinship, political alliances, the Jewish Diaspora, and other church and leadership connections, such as with Cyprus, Paul's first destination (4.36; 11.19-20; 13.4). It is likely that there are other such relational connections, which help to facilitate Paul's initial approach to a new city or area.

<sup>114</sup> According to Paul, there was also conflict at Antioch in the early days, surrounding the issue of Jewish food laws (Gal 2.11-14). Luke does not mention this conflict, and is therefore to some extent idealizing the reality of the church at Antioch. This strengthens the argument; in Acts Luke presents Antioch as an ideal local church for later churches to imitate and follow, even if this means overlooking aspects of the early life of that church.

## CHAPTER 13 - PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY (18.23b-21.17)

**Table 13.1 The Third Itinerary (18.23b-21.17) – 53-57 CE<sup>1</sup>**

18.22	Syrian Antioch	20.5-6	Troas (by ship)
18.23	Galatia and Phrygia (Tarsus, Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Pisidian Antioch)	20.13	Assos (by foot, others by ship)
19.1	By 'upper parts' to Ephesus (avoiding Colossae)	20.14	Mitylene (by ship)
19.10	Two years in Ephesus	20.15	Chios, Samos (by ship), Trogyllium and Miletus (by foot)
20.1	Macedonia (by land, or ship, via Troas?)	21.1	Cos, Rhodes, and Patara (all by ship)
20.2	Greece (by land?)	21.3	Syria – Tyre (by ship)
20.3	Macedonia (by land?)	21.7	Ptolemais (by ship)
20.6	Philippi (via Neapolis?)	21.8	Caesarea (by ship)
		21.17	Jerusalem

### 13.1 Galatia and Phrygia (18.23b-28)

Paul begins his third missionary trip by travelling 'from place to place in succession (*καθεξῆς*) throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia (*Γαλατικὴν χώραν καὶ Φρυγίαν*), *strengthening all the disciples*' (*ἐπιστηρίζων πάντας τοὺς μαθητάς*, 18.23).<sup>2</sup> Paul retraces the path he took through these regions on his second missionary journey, stopping at his hometown of Tarsus, passing through the Cilician gate, and then travelling on to Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch to encourage and strengthen the new churches there. 'The use of "in succession" (*καθεξῆς*) here suggests a picture of Paul systematically moving through all the communities that had been established by the earlier mission (14.6), carrying out a pastoral visitation similar to those described in 14.21-22 and 15.41.'<sup>3</sup>

#### 13.1.1 Strengthening the Churches

Paul's first priority on this third missionary trip is strengthening the multiple churches that he has helped to establish. As previously seen, *ἐπιστηρίζω*, 'to strengthen' is a word unique to Acts in the NT, and Paul engages in this kind of strengthening three times (14.22; 15.41;

<sup>1</sup> As before, any mode of travel other than by foot is noted, as well as when it is uncertain.

<sup>2</sup> The geographical designator Galatia and Phrygia has been much debated, though it probably means the exact same thing as 16.6, 'Phrygian and Galatian region' (*τὴν Φρυγίαν καὶ Γαλατικὴν χώραν*). See Hemer's discussion of this, *Acts*, 120. He makes the point that Phrygia extended into the province of Asia, beyond Galatia, and dismisses the notion of new destinations in 'north Galatia', as some have proposed.

<sup>3</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 331. This is a mountainous journey of some 1,500 miles, probably undertaken completely on foot. It was only possible to pass through the Cilician gate in the spring and summer, so Paul likely embarked in late spring of 53 CE, not arriving into Ephesus until that autumn; Witherington, *Acts*, 560.

18.23). It is derived from ἐπί (upon, at, by), and στηρίζω (to fix firmly in place, set up, establish, support; to cause to be inwardly firm or committed, confirm, strengthen).<sup>4</sup> Paul uses στηρίζω in a similar sense, meaning strengthening or establishing the church.<sup>5</sup>

The NT also uses στηρίζω to refer to an individual strengthening of faith or resolve (cf. Lk 22.32; Jas 5.8; 1 Pet 5.10). In Lk 16.26 Luke gives a sense of the permanence, or immovability of the concept: ‘between us and you there is a great chasm *fixed* (χάσμα μέγα ἐστήρικται), so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us’. This illustrates what Luke means by ἐπιστηρίζω in Acts: Paul longs for the new churches to be permanent and immovable in their faith and commitment to God and his mission, particularly in the face of troubles and persecution. When Paul ‘strengthens’ the churches and disciples, he is attempting to give them the ability to remain true and ‘fixed’ to God and his cause, no matter what comes against them.

Paul sees this strengthening of the churches as a core part of his calling. ‘Once churches have been established in an area, Paul will visit them again in order to strengthen them. Only then is Paul’s work in an area relatively complete.’<sup>6</sup> He knows that difficulties will come, and he is determined that they will survive and prosper, so he visits them as often as he can.<sup>7</sup> Paul’s mission is to establish thriving local congregations of believers, and if they are not able to survive and grow, then his mission will ultimately fail. As a spiritual father, Paul does everything he can to ensure that the young churches are healthy and strong.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> BDAG, 945. Στηρίζω occurs 13 times in the NT: Lk 9.51; 16.26; 22.32; Rom 1.11; 16.25; 1 Thes 3.2,13; 2 Thes 2.17; 3.3; Jas 5.8; 1 Pet 5.10; 2 Pet 1.12; Rev 3.2.

<sup>5</sup> Rom 1.11; 16.25; 1 Thes 3.2; 3.13; 2 Thes 2.17; 3.3 show that this is a ministry priority for Paul.

<sup>6</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2.230.

<sup>7</sup> Paul visits the churches in Galatia and Phrygia on three later occasions (14.21-23; 16.1-5; 18.23), and those in Macedonia and Achaia two subsequent times (19.21; 20.1-3). His letter writing is another important part of this strategy, as are the visits from his associates and ministry partners, for further training and instruction.

<sup>8</sup> This fatherly affection is implicit in Acts, but explicit throughout his letters, cf. Phil 1.7-8: ‘For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart...for God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus’; 2 Cor 7.3: ‘I do not speak to condemn you, for I have said before that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together.’ His fatherly ambition is also apparent in the prayers he prays for them (e.g., Eph 1.15-21; 3.14-19); and the exhortations he gives them (Rom 1.11; Col 1.23; 2.7).

### 13.1.2 Leadership Development, Relational Mentoring, and an Expanding Mission

A Jew from Alexandria named Apollos lives in Ephesus, a zealous and eloquent missionary, 'boiling over in spirit' (ζέων τῷ πνεύματι), who needs further instruction from Priscilla and Aquila (18.24-26). It is unknown how Apollos first becomes a Christian, or how Aquila and Priscilla (from Rome) convert, which points to the reality that there were other travelling missionaries in early Christianity.<sup>9</sup> Luke chooses to focus on Paul, perhaps the most prominent of them, but he is surely not wholly unique. A multiplicity of pioneering leaders and church-planters, such as Apollos, are emerging during this period.

Priscilla and Aquila take Apollos aside (προσελάβοντο αὐτόν), and explain (ἐξέθεντο – expose, expound) to him the way of God (τὴν ὁδὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ) more accurately (ἀκριβέστερον – precisely, exactly, thoroughly, 18.26). These descriptors point to the habit of intentional mentoring, and the forming of a teacher/pupil relationship between these three.<sup>10</sup> This is probably informal, relational teaching, largely done in the home, likely around meals and table fellowship. This type of unstructured training expands the mission and develops new leaders, such as Apollos. Behind the scenes this same pattern is surely repeated across the networks of young churches, as emerging leaders are trained and mentored by more experienced leaders.<sup>11</sup>

Apollos desires to go to Achaia, so the disciples in Ephesus write (ἔγραψαν) him a letter of commendation to take to Corinth (18.27).<sup>12</sup> Apollos proves to be helpful to the new church in Corinth, publicly debating and refuting the Jews (τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις διακατηλέγγετο

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<sup>9</sup> Alexandria is the second largest city in the Empire, and has a large Jewish Diaspora population, so it is a natural destination for a missionary. Barnabas and Mark could have gone there after their time in Cyprus (Acts 15.39), and seen Apollos converted then. Additionally, the array of peoples assembled in Jerusalem at Pentecost (including some from Rome, Acts 2.10-11) may have also contributed to an initial distribution of Christians and churches throughout the Roman and Parthian Empires, as they returned to their homes (Acts 2.5-12,41).

<sup>10</sup> The length of this mentoring relationship is unknown, but it is important enough to be mentioned here. The word accurate (ἀκριβῶς) here refers back to the previous verse and description of Apollos, and also to Luke's stated intention in the Gospel prologue, Lk 1.3. Johnson, *Acts*, 332.

<sup>11</sup> This would happen naturally among the relational networks and informal leadership structures of the church.

<sup>12</sup> These letters were common in the NT world: 2 Cor 3.1; Rom 16.1; Col 4.10. Barrett, *Acts*, 2.890. Paul carries a similar letter earlier (Acts 15.22-29).



δημοσίᾳ), and proving from the Scriptures (ἐπιδεικνύς διὰ τῶν γραφῶν) that Jesus is the Christ (18.28).<sup>13</sup> This episode shows that the effort to strengthen the new churches is broadening. Apollos' missionary visit to Corinth and Achaia is not orchestrated by Paul, but is indirectly influenced by him, in that he invested in Aquila and Priscilla, who then mentor Apollos.<sup>14</sup> Apollos plays a principal role in the growth of the team of Pauline missional partners, as the newly formed network of churches continues to flourish.<sup>15</sup>

### 13.2 Ephesus (19.1-41)

While Apollos is in Corinth, Paul takes the road through the interior and arrives back at Ephesus (19.1).<sup>16</sup> Ephesus dominates Luke's account of Paul's third journey, for Paul helps to birth the church and movement there, and returns to speak to the new Ephesian elders on his way home. 'Ephesus is not just another stop in a series. It is Paul's last major place of new mission work as a free man...The fact that Paul's farewell speech will be addressed to the Ephesian elders is a further indication of the special importance of Ephesus.'<sup>17</sup>

#### 13.2.1 An Influential Urban Centre

Ephesus is a city of great importance in the ancient world, second only to Corinth of the cities which Paul seeks to evangelize.<sup>18</sup> It is the hub of all culture and commerce in western Asia, for from there the Roman roads spread out into the interior.<sup>19</sup> The main road connecting the eastern and western portion of the Empire also originates from Ephesus.<sup>20</sup> It is a major

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<sup>13</sup> Apollos' use of the Scripture is identical to that of Paul in 17.2-3; cf. also 9.22 of Paul. Johnson, *Acts*, 333.

<sup>14</sup> 'The effect of [this story] is to make Apollos a helpful but secondary participant in the messianic movement... a teacher instructed by the Pauline school and commissioned by the churches. But Apollos is also, we should note finally, another part of Paul's team – like Priscilla and Aquila themselves', Johnson, *Acts*, 335.

<sup>15</sup> Apollos' visit to Corinth also creates division within that young church, as they seem to prefer his eloquence to Paul's manner of speaking (1 Cor 1-4). Paul attempts to show that he and Apollos are not in competition, but work together (1 Cor 1.12; 3.4). This may also explain why Apollos is later reluctant to return to Corinth (1 Cor 16.12). Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 82-86.

<sup>16</sup> He probably left the main road towards Ephesus at Apamea, and therefore did not go through Colossae. Col 1.7 and 2.1 suggest that Paul's co-worker, Epaphras, was the founder of the community in Colossae. F. F. Bruce, *Acts*, 405.

<sup>17</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2.231.

<sup>18</sup> For background information on Ephesus, focusing on its devotion to Artemis, see Johnson, *Paul*, 113-24.

<sup>19</sup> The seven churches of Rev 2-3 are in the order one would reach them following the main road from Ephesus.

<sup>20</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 563.

connecting link within the Empire's communication network, because of the land routes that lead to the interior of Asia, the sea routes from Asia west, and the mouth of the Cayster River, which lies nearby. It is the seat of provincial government, which means that the proconsul lives there, along with 200,000 to 250,000 residents, making it the largest city in Asia.<sup>21</sup> The temple of Artemis is located in Ephesus, one of the great wonders of the ancient world, which makes it a major destination for the religious tourist trade. It is famous as a centre for magic arts and the occult. And there is a large Jewish colony in the city.<sup>22</sup> All of these factors make Ephesus an ideal strategic centre for the Christian mission in Asia.

### *13.2.2 The Legitimizing Power of the Holy Spirit*

In Ephesus, Paul meets some 'disciples' (μαθητάς) who have received John's baptism, but have not heard of the Holy Spirit (19.1-3).<sup>23</sup> Paul explains that John's baptism is a baptism of repentance, and that John pointed people towards believing in and following Jesus (19.4). Upon hearing this, they are baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus, receive the Holy Spirit when Paul lays hands on them, and begin to speak in tongues and prophesy (19.5-6).<sup>24</sup>

This is another supernatural demonstration of power validating the message, although this time it comes after the disciples believe, confirming the truth of their choice. Luke emphasizes that the Holy Spirit comes upon them 'at the hands of Paul' (τοῦ Παύλου τὰς χεῖρας, 19.6). God's power validates the message and messenger, and also legitimates these new believers: 'The fact that it is the apostle Paul who is the medium for this bestowal has a legitimating function: these erstwhile Johannine disciples are brought within the apostolic community and authority.'<sup>25</sup> There are about twelve men in this group (19.7).<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 563.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Josephus, *Ant.*, 14.225-227; 16.162-168, 172-173. Witherington, *Acts*, 564.

<sup>23</sup> There is debate about who these 'disciples' are. Luke is attempting to clarify John's role as pre-cursor to Jesus, and the relationship between the Johannine sectarian Jewish baptizing movement and Paul's church-planting movement. See also 1.5; 11.16; 13.25; 18.25. Luke is probably claiming that they were not actually Christians. Witherington, *Acts*, 570; Marshall, *Acts*, 305; Weiser, *Apostel.*, 514-16..

<sup>24</sup> The Spirit accompanies the laying on of hands rather than the baptism, as in the Samaritan mission (8.17).

<sup>25</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 338.

### *13.2.3 Establishing the Initial Core Group*

Paul returns to the Ephesian synagogue where he was previously well received (18.9), continuing his missional practice of going to the place where he has the most natural rapport and connection. He begins the task of ‘arguing persuasively about the Kingdom of God’ (*διαλεγόμενος και πείθων τὰ περὶ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ*), and continues to do this for three months (*μῆνας τρεῖς*, 19.8).<sup>27</sup> Some of his listeners refuse to believe and publicly malign the Way, so Paul leaves the synagogue and enters the lecture hall of Tyrannus (19.9).<sup>28</sup>

Paul ‘took the disciples with him’ (*ἀφώρισεν τοὺς μαθητάς*) to this hall, indicating that there is already a small Christian group at this point, made up of the initial converts from Paul’s time of preaching in the Ephesian synagogue, plus possibly the twelve who had received the Spirit and been baptized (19.5-7). Paul has already succeeded in gathering a group of new Ephesian believers together, made up of receptive Jews and God-fearers. The most crucial part of the mission has now been accomplished: a strategic ‘beach-head’ has been established in Ephesus, in the form of a newly-developed house church. This budding church functions as the nucleus and foundation for an emerging city-wide network of house churches, and eventually for a regional outreach to the surrounding areas of Asia.

### *13.2.4 Developing a City-Wide Church*

In the past, Paul would have probably left Ephesus at this point, leaving the church to grow on its own. However, this time he takes this group into the hall of Tyrannus for further teaching and evangelistic proclamation (19.9). Luke implies that Paul’s experience in Corinth has altered his missional strategy. Jesus instructed him to stay longer in Corinth, and

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<sup>26</sup> Luke may be implying that these men become an initial core of the church in Ephesus, and even provide the credibility, plus a household and a hospitality invitation, which Paul needs to begin to impact Ephesus.

<sup>27</sup> Here we have three missional words (see ch. 3): *παρρησιάζομαι*, *διαλέγομαι*, and *πείθω*.

<sup>28</sup> *Τῇ σχολῇ Τυράννου* lit. means Tyrannus’ school, but is most likely a public auditorium or lecture hall. Luke portrays Paul here as a popular speaker or philosopher seeking to persuade an audience on a subject.

he saw the fruit of perseverance (18.9-11), in the form of a more established congregation, capable of impacting a city and region. This convinces Paul to stay longer in Ephesus.

Paul preaches and teaches ‘daily’ (καθ’ ἡμέραν) in the lecture hall for two years (19.9-10a). In the synagogue he would have only been able to teach weekly on the Sabbath, so the change of venue signals a multiplication of gatherings, publicity, and influence within the city, as well as an acceleration of the Ephesian church’s growth.<sup>29</sup> Tyrannus’ hall is an ideal public venue, which gives the growing church vital exposure to the wider public. Paul is intent on making an impact in this city, so he invests there in an unprecedented way.<sup>30</sup>

Paul stays in Ephesus for nearly three years (20.31),<sup>31</sup> which implies that Paul settles in fairly permanently, and sees Ephesus as a home-base.<sup>32</sup> In these three years, the Ephesian church transitions from a house church to a city-wide network of multiplied house churches.

### *13.2.5 Birthing a Regional Missional Movement*

Paul’s focused strategy is so successful that after over two years Luke can claim that, ‘all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord’ (πάντας τοὺς κατοικοῦντας τὴν Ἀσίαν ἀκοῦσαι τὸν λόγον τοῦ κυρίου, Ἰουδαίους τε καὶ Ἑλληνας, 19.10b).

Luke surely means that the word spread from Ephesus all over the province of Asia, to all of the major areas and population centres.<sup>33</sup> Reaching an entire province in a period of just over two years would imply and require an intentional regional missional strategy.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, 2.905. ‘Daily preaching’ for two years in one location is extraordinary for Paul.

<sup>30</sup> The longest Paul had ever stayed in any one destination before was in Corinth for about 18 months.

<sup>31</sup> If we add these two years (19.10) to the three months in the synagogue (19.8) and the ‘some time longer’ (ἐπέσχευ χρόνον) later (19.22), we arrive at approximately three years (20.31). It was customary to count any part of an additional year as a full year; it is more likely that Paul is in Ephesus for about two and a half years.

<sup>32</sup> It is likely that Paul wrote 1 Cor during this time, and another lost letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 5.9-10). He may have even paid a quick visit to Corinth during his time in Ephesus. Witherington, *Acts*, 573.

<sup>33</sup> ‘There is no reason to think that anything less than the whole province is intended’, Barrett, *Acts*, 2.905. For Paul’s own inclusively hyperbolic way of generalizing the extent of his missionary activity, see his similar statement in Rom 15.19: ‘from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.’ These are not necessarily meant to be taken literally, but neither are they misleading.

<sup>34</sup> ‘We begin to see the emergence of Christianity as a separate movement’, Johnson, *Acts*, 339.

### 13.2.5.1 Excursus – Epaphras and the Pauline Missionary Movement in Asia

Luke does not say that Paul carries the word of the Lord to every place in Asia himself, which implies that workers connected with and trained by Paul do a large portion of this evangelistic work. One such instance is known: Paul tells the church at Colossae about, ‘the gospel which has come to you...just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant (Επαφρᾶ τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ συνδούλου ἡμῶν), who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf (πιστὸς ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν διάκονος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, Col 1.5-7).<sup>35</sup> Colossae is a city up the Lycus Valley from Ephesus, on the east-west trade route leading from Ephesus on the Aegean Sea to the Euphrates River, and these verses show that a co-worker of Paul’s named Epaphras went there, preached the gospel, and started the Colossian church.<sup>36</sup>

Epaphras is extremely committed to this area of Asia: ‘Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bonds slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, *always labouring earnestly for you in his prayers*, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. For I testify for him that *he has a deep concern for you [the Colossians] and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis*’ (Col 4.12-13).<sup>37</sup> ‘Those in Hierapolis and Laodicea’ refers to believers and the local churches of which they are a part, and indicates that Epaphras also began churches in Laodicea and Hierapolis, two other nearby cities in the Lycus Valley.<sup>38</sup>

These verses in Colossians hint at a microcosm of the regional strategy in Asia.

#### **Table 13.2 A Hypothetical Reconstruction of Epaphras’ Progression from New Christian to Church-Planter: A Microcosm of the Regional Missional Strategy in Asia**

- 1) *Saved* in the early days of Paul’s outreach in *Ephesus* (Acts 19.8; possibly 19.1-7).
- 2) *Becomes part* of the new Ephesian church, where he is personally *mentored* and *discipled* (Acts 19.9).
- 3) *Identified* as a potential leader and missionary, and *leads* and *oversees* house churches in Ephesus.
- 4) *Trained* by Paul, and other Pauline associates, during Paul’s lengthy stay in Ephesus (Acts 19.10a,22,31).
- 5) *Sent out*, probably with a small ministry team, to *Colossae*, a city on the Lycus River (Col 1.5-7).

<sup>35</sup> The evidence in this section is clearly from a Pauline source and not from Acts, yet it is a relevant proposed historical reconstruction of what Luke hints at but does not describe in detail in Asia (Acts 19).

<sup>36</sup> Col 2.1 indicates that the Colossians had not personally met Paul, or ‘seen his face’. Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colossae were crucial for this stage of the expansion of the Ephesian church. Cf. Johnson, *Paul*, 125-36.

<sup>37</sup> Paul also mentions this same Epaphras in Phlm 1.23: ‘Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you.’ Epaphras may have been a prisoner with Paul in Rome, or this may be a metaphorical use of the word.

<sup>38</sup> Hierapolis was a town in Asia Minor about six miles from Laodicea, and about 14 miles from Colossae.

- 6) *Builds evangelistic relationships* with receptive social networks and people of influence in Colossae.
- 7) *Establishes* a house church at Colossae, imitating his teacher Paul in Ephesus (Acts 19.20).
- 8) *Leads* the Colossian church to be strengthened and established, and to grow into a city-wide church network.
- 9) *Trained and sent out* to plant churches in the neighbouring cities of *Laodicea* and *Hierapolis*, with some of his co-workers in Colossae, and some of the new Colossian believers (Col 4.12-13; Phlm 1-2,23-24).<sup>39</sup>
- 10) *Repeats steps 5-9* (his converts follow steps 1-10), in a missional cycle of church-planting throughout Asia.

Thus there are concrete glimpses in Acts and Colossians of a regional mission strategy on two levels: on a macro level across the province of Asia, instigated by Paul, and on a micro level across the immediate region surrounding Colossae and the Lycus Valley, begun by Paul's disciple Epaphras. As Murphy-O'Connor explains:

The success of Paul and his collaborators in establishing a flourishing community in Ephesus had unexpected side-benefits in the foundation of churches elsewhere in the province...the existence of Christian communities outside Ephesus is attested by the greetings which 'the churches of Asia' (1 Cor 16.19) send to Corinth. The only names of such churches known to us from the Pauline letters are Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis (Col 4.13), but it would be unwise to assume that this list is exhaustive.<sup>40</sup>

If Epaphras can be shown to have done this in Colossae and the surrounding region, there is no reason to believe that there were not multiple others who carried out similar missions in other parts of Asia, sent out from the mother church in Ephesus.<sup>41</sup> 'Col 1.7 suggests a duly authorized missionary, i.e. one sent by Paul (cf. 2 Cor 11.23). This is confirmed by Col 4.7-8; Phlm 23; Phil 2.25...The warmth with which Paul speaks of Epaphras reveals his confidence in him...His relationship to Paul probably typifies that of the missionaries who were sent elsewhere in Asia.'<sup>42</sup>

Paul must have learned that he did not have to do everything, but could train and commission others to carry out the mission on his behalf. At Ephesus this strategy comes into full effect. 'It is unlikely that Epaphras was the only missionary sent out from Ephesus,

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<sup>39</sup> Phlm is written to a Colossian believer, and 1.1-2,23-24 name Philemon, Apphia, Archippus, *Epaphras*, Mark, Aristarchus, and Demas, all possible co-workers and missionaries in this area, who may have helped to establish these churches, which were likely primarily Gentile. For Aristarchus, cf. Acts 19.29; 20.4; 27.2.

<sup>40</sup> J. Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997): 173.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Eusebius, *HE*, 1.4.3-4: 'But the number and the names of those among them that became true and zealous followers of the apostles, and were judged worthy to tend the churches founded by them, it is not easy to tell, except those mentioned in the writings of Paul. *For he had innumerable fellow-laborers, or fellow-soldiers, as he called them...*'

<sup>42</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 174.

and it is far from impossible that most if not all of the churches in western Asia were established as part of the planned outreach of the Ephesian community guided by Paul.<sup>43</sup>

The seven churches of Revelation are further textual evidence that missionaries sent out from Ephesus started churches across Asia: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea (Rev 2-3) are all strategic cities scattered across the province of Asia, and all relatively close to Ephesus.<sup>44</sup> As Barrett comments, 'Revelation 2 and 3 are sufficient to show that leading cities in Asia had been evangelized at a fairly early date; at the time of writing some at least of the seven churches addressed were in a state of decline.'<sup>45</sup> It is likely that all of these churches, and many others as well, were founded directly out of the missional sending centre that Paul and his associates create at Ephesus.<sup>46</sup>

If Ephesus and Laodicea, two of the seven churches of the Apocalypse (Rev 2.1-3.22), were Pauline foundations (the latter at least indirectly through Epaphras), then there is no obstacle to attributing the creation of communities at Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia to the missionary initiative of Ephesus. To these might be added Magnesia and Tralles, whose churches are known from the letters of Ignatius. All are within a 192 km. (120 mile) radius of Ephesus, and linked by major roads. Colossae, the furthest away, could be reached in a comfortable week's walk from Ephesus.<sup>47</sup>

This indicates at least nine Christian centres throughout Asia, when Colossae and Hierapolis are included, and there were surely multiple others as well, such as Magnesia and Tralles. It is likely that many of these also became missional hubs for their immediate region.

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<sup>43</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 174.

<sup>44</sup> Smyrna (Rev 2.8-11) was a coastal city just north of Ephesus with a large Jewish population. Polycarp, the most famous of the early martyrs, was bishop of Smyrna. Pergamum (Rev 2.12-17) was the ancient capital of Asia, and was built on a cone-shaped hill rising 1,000 feet above the surrounding valley (*Πέργαμος* means citadel, or elevation). It possessed many important temples, along with a giant library possessing 200,000 books, and was a political and religious centre. Thyatira (Rev 2.18-29) was an ancient military outpost, and was noted for its many trade guilds. Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth, was from Thyatira (Acts 16.14). Sardis (Rev 3.1-6), the old capital of the kingdom of Lydia, had an acropolis on the top of a natural citadel on the northern spur of Mount Tmolus, and was a city of great wealth and fame. Philadelphia (Rev 3.7-13) was a city of commercial importance located at the gateway to the high central plateau of Asia. Finally, Laodicea (Rev 3.14-22), a city 40 miles south-east of Philadelphia and forty miles east of Ephesus, was very wealthy and was famous for its banking establishments, medical school, and textile industry. It lay on the river Lycus on the border of Phrygia. For more details about these seven cities, see D. E. Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, WBC 52 (Dallas: Word, 1997): 130-32, 136-41, 159-60, 180-81, 201, 218-19, 234-35, 249-50.

<sup>45</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, 2.906.

<sup>46</sup> This may not have all happened during Paul's three year stay at Ephesus. But it is initiated during Paul's stay, and is a direct result of his focused investment in the Ephesian church.

<sup>47</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 175.

### 13.2.52 Rapid Reproduction

Paul teaches the believers in Ephesus how to reproduce their church into the surrounding areas, and gives them an intentional missional vision for all of Asia. Though he eventually leaves, the Ephesian church continues in this mission of reaching the entire Asian province, and possibly beyond. The letter to the Ephesians reflects the vitality and dynamism of this local church, which was fully capable of impacting an entire region.<sup>48</sup>

The result of Paul's ministry in Ephesus is a large network of relationally connected, rapidly reproducing house churches throughout the province of Asia, covering its significant population centres. Because of this, Luke can claim that all within the province of Asia have heard. As Barrett explains, 'Luke simply affirms [in 19.10b] widespread evangelistic activity, and the affirmation could be based simply on the fact that Asia as he knew it was one of the most developed Christian mission fields.'<sup>49</sup>

The church at Ephesus becomes another 'Antioch church', a dynamic hub for training and sending out missionaries to unreached areas. In addition, there is no reason to believe that these newly trained missionaries remain only in Asia. They surely also go to areas much farther afield, even as Paul had done in coming to Ephesus from Antioch in the first place.

### 13.2.5.3 The Supernatural Power of God

This expansion is fuelled by the supernatural power of God, working primarily through Paul. Luke says that Paul did 'no ordinary powerful deeds' (*δυνάμεις τε οὐ τὰς τυχούσας*, 19.11). Then he relates stories of handkerchiefs and aprons touching Paul and healing the sick, and casting evil spirits out of them (19.12).<sup>50</sup> God moves dynamically through Paul in Ephesus, continuing to confirm Paul's message through signs and wonders. This sort of supernatural ministry undoubtedly attracts large numbers of followers to listen to the word Paul is

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<sup>48</sup> Ephesians is the only NT letter that contains no rebuke, and that does not address any theological error.

<sup>49</sup> Barrett, *Acts*, 2.906. Our reconstruction of mission emanating out from Ephesus reflects this idea.

<sup>50</sup> The image is that people would come to Paul as he was working, and he would give them items of his clothing, used in his trade of tent-making (18.3). Witherington, *Acts*, 580.



preaching, and greatly accelerates the rates of conversion in Ephesus, contributing to the rapid expansion of the church on a local and on an extra-local level.

Luke tells the story of the sons of Sceva, who attempt to imitate Paul and cast out demons in the name of Jesus, but are overpowered by the evil spirits (19.13-16).<sup>51</sup> This emphasizes that Paul's authority is due to Jesus, and should be fully attributed to God. Luke underlines this with the Ephesians' reaction: 'Fear (φόβος) fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified' (ἐμεγαλύνετο, esteemed, enlarged, honoured, 19.17). The power at work is of divine origin, and God deserves the honour for all that is happening.

This incident provokes many who had become Christians to openly confess their evil deeds (19.18), and voluntarily burn valuable scrolls related to magic and sorcery (19.19).<sup>52</sup> This scene shows partially socialized Christians, who had not given up all of their old practices when they converted, making further commitments to Christianity and giving up their old pagan ways.<sup>53</sup> God is drawing in the fringes of the Ephesian church, and expanding the core of highly committed and involved people.<sup>54</sup> Some of these newly devoted believers who had remained on the periphery would become leaders and missionaries, further accelerating the expansion of the Ephesian movement. The influence of social networks is also seen in this episode, culminating in 'many' (πολλοί, 19.18; ἱκανοί, 19.19) coming, and confessing their practices. It also demonstrates the triumph of the power of the Christian God and message over all of the 'false powers' of magic, witchcraft, sorcery, and the occult.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Many commentators refer to this as comic relief in the middle of an otherwise serious narrative.

<sup>52</sup> As Bruce explains, the power of spells lies in their secrecy, so to bring them into the open is to render them powerless, *Acts*, 412. The total value of these scrolls is fifty thousand pieces of silver, a fortune. Luke would not have included this number had he not thought it impressive. Johnson, *Acts*, 342.

<sup>53</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 582. In any religious movement there are differing levels of commitment; people closer to the centre will be more committed and willing to sacrifice, while people further away from the core will be less so. Cf. Crossley, *Why Christianity Happened*, 150-72 for discussion on varying levels of commitment, observance, and conformity in the religious world of antiquity.

<sup>54</sup> Most of Paul's letters to the churches are dealing with this very issue of how to draw young converts into more comprehensive levels of commitment and conformity to the Christian way of living. Cf. e.g., 1 Cor 7.

<sup>55</sup> Ephesus was infamous throughout the Roman world as a centre for magic, sorcery, and other demonic activity. Luke knows that for Christianity to defeat witchcraft on its 'home-turf' was a bold and significant victory. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 30.

For Luke, these acts of public renunciation of evil are the proper response to pagan religion, particularly in light of the Jerusalem decree (Acts 15). They allow the gospel to take deeper root in Ephesus, and to spread more rapidly throughout the region. This is underscored by the next verse, which is connected to the previous episode in a causative way (οὕτως): ‘therefore the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power’ (οὕτως κατὰ κράτος τοῦ Κυρίου ὁ λόγος ἠὔξανεν καὶ ἴσχυεν, 19.20). This re-emphasizes the triumph of God’s word over every other power, and can also be understood in a geographical sense, related to the overall mission in Asia, based in Ephesus. Because of all of these spiritual encounters, which so clearly demonstrate and confirm the veracity of the message being preached, the word is triumphantly spreading from city to city.<sup>56</sup> This reminds the reader of the missional advance that is taking place across Asia, fuelled by God’s supernatural power.

The Ephesus account convincingly portrays Paul as a man of mighty deeds and authority, like Jesus and Peter before him. Paul is a man of powerful words, and of powerful action. In many ways this is the narrative climax of Paul’s ministry as a free man: ‘The Ephesian Church, established by an apostle, triumphant over the demonic powers of magic, independent of the synagogue yet drawing into itself both Jews and Gentiles, is the final evidence within Luke’s text for the success and integrity of Paul’s mission.’<sup>57</sup> Luke presents all that happens in Ephesus as a model for mission that invites emulation by his readers.

### **Table 13.3 The Pauline Mission in Asia: A Reproducing Movement**

- 1) Paul shares the gospel with receptive people of influence in Ephesus (Acts 19.1-8).
- 2) He forms these early believers into a house church (Acts 19.9).
- 3) Paul ‘reproduces’ his spiritual life and values into the lives of the early Ephesian converts, and begins to equip them for spiritual leadership (Acts 19.9b).
- 4) Paul evangelizes at Ephesus for two years, preaching daily at the lecture Hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19.9-10a).
- 5) As the Christian community in Ephesus grows, the initial house church multiplies into many others, led by the leaders and co-labourers Paul is training.
- 6) Many are gathered by supernatural signs and wonders being done in the name of the Lord (Acts 19.11-17).

<sup>56</sup> One can imagine how word of these sorts of things transpiring in Ephesus would have spread rapidly all over the province of Asia (cf. 19.17). The gospel was gaining quite a reputation, one of power and authority and triumph. This would have accelerated the advance of the word across Asia dramatically.

<sup>57</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 344.

- 7) Multiple converts are mentored, drawn into the core of the church, and increase their commitment by renouncing their former lifestyles and pagan practices, further strengthening the church (Acts 19.18-19)
- 8) With time and further investment, the congregations in Ephesus gain a city-wide scope and impact, and the home groups meet in many different areas of the city (Acts 19.20).
- 9) High-calibre house church leaders emerge out of this network, some of whom help Paul to oversee the city-wide Ephesian church (Acts 19.22,29,31).
- 10) Other strategic emerging leaders (such as Epaphras) are sent out to other regional cities in Asia to reproduce this process. These new missionaries establish their own rudimentary churches (Col 1.5-7).
- 11) The new churches reproduce themselves to form city-wide house church networks, and additional hubs for regional mission, planting churches in surrounding towns and cities (Col 4.12-13; Phlm 1-2,23-24).
- 12) This reproduction results in exponential church growth in a relatively short amount of time; as the missional cycle repeats itself, the momentum of the regional movement gains a life of its own (Rev 1.11; 2.1-3.22).
- 13) In time, every significant population centre in Asia has an expanding and reproducing missional church, so that 'all who live in Asia heard the word of the Lord' (Acts 19.10b).

### *13.2.6 Opposition*

Although Paul has enjoyed a relatively peaceful existence in Ephesus thus far, a riot develops (19.23-40). The workmen who create idols are angry, because their business has been harmed by Paul's ministry in the city; the demand for pagan idols has diminished as a result of Paul's teaching (19.24-27). This emphasizes the divine word's complete triumph over paganism, particularly vital in light of the Council's prohibition of idolatry.<sup>58</sup>

In the Ephesian riot scene, Luke discloses that Paul has gained friends (φίλοι) among the Asiarchs (Ἀσιαρχῶν, 19.31), a prestigious upper-class group in Asia.<sup>59</sup> Some of these may have been members of the Ephesian church, and would have been vital patrons and sources of resources, property, social contacts and credibility for the growing congregation. Though Paul is detained, he is not harmed, and is eventually released peacefully (19.41).

### *13.3 The Long Road to Jerusalem (20.1-21.17)*

While in Ephesus, 'Paul purposed in the Spirit (ἔθετο ὁ Παῦλος ἐν τῷ πνεύματι) to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia' (19.21).<sup>60</sup> This is an

<sup>58</sup> This is Luke's final persuasive evidence of the superiority of the gospel over pagan worship and practice, a point which Luke illustrates in multiple different ways, particularly in Ephesus.

<sup>59</sup> Though scholars are not sure of their precise religious or political function, the Asiarchs in Asia are well attested, cf. Strabo, *Geography*, 14.649-665; *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 12. Luke again shows a masterful grasp of local political and social arrangements (cf. 16.20; 17.6,22; 18.12), and demonstrates the mission's success among the upper classes (cf. 17.4,12,34). Johnson, *Acts*, 349.

<sup>60</sup> Notice that this is attributed to the spirit, which could be Paul's spirit, or the Holy Spirit, or both. Paul will go to Jerusalem, but he will pass through the churches he began on the second journey first. Cf. Rom 15.22-25.

extremely roundabout way to return to Jerusalem from Ephesus, especially since Paul has already sailed directly from Ephesus to Jerusalem once (18.21-22).

### 13.3.1 Caring for the Churches

Paul has a motivation for this long and wearisome journey: he longs to see his churches, and to build them up.<sup>61</sup> His concern for the churches can be seen in how he plans his itinerary.

Paul's care for the church is re-emphasized as he leaves Ephesus. He does not leave immediately, but makes a point of sending for the Ephesian disciples (*μαθητάς*), encouraging them (*παρακαλέσας* – comfort, exhort, encourage), and saying goodbye (*ἀσπασάμενος* – embrace, enfold in one's arms, salute) to them (20.1). He has spent a significant amount of time with these people, sharing life experiences and challenges with them. Though Paul is driven, he is not too quick to move to the next thing, but values saying goodbye.<sup>62</sup>

Paul then embarks on the long journey through Macedonia and Achaia to bless the young churches he has recently founded. 'It was Paul's practice to reinforce and strengthen churches he had already founded, and this we see him doing in 20.1-5 as he travels back through Macedonia and Achaia.'<sup>63</sup> In Acts 20.2, 'he travelled throughout those districts (*διελθὼν δὲ τὰ μέρη ἐκεῖνα*), speaking many words of encouragement to the people (*παρακαλέσας αὐτοὺς λόγῳ πολλῶ*), and finally arrived in Greece.'<sup>64</sup> This means retracing his steps through Troas, Neapolis, Philippi, Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens, before arriving in Corinth, where he stays for three months (20.3).<sup>65</sup> Paul's teaching to each of these churches is surely focused on expanding the mission, and training the core

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<sup>61</sup> Though Luke does not mention it here, Paul's other motivation is to collect the offering to take back with him for the Jerusalem church (24.17 shows that he is aware of it). Cf. Rom 15.23-25. Luke may not include this because it did not accomplish what Paul had hoped for. Cf. Rom 15.16,27,31. Witherington, *Acts*, 588.

<sup>62</sup> This will be seen most clearly in his farewell speech to the Ephesian elders (20.17-38).

<sup>63</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 601. 'Paul is shown engaging in the same sort of pastoral visitation of churches that he had previously founded, as in 14.21-22; 15.36; 16.4-5; 18.23', Johnson, *Acts*, 354.

<sup>64</sup> According to 2 Cor 1-7, this verse covered a long period of time, and Luke is telescoping and summarizing. Bruce, *Acts*, 423. Bruce also suggests that Paul may have gone up to Illyricum at this point (Rom 15.19).

<sup>65</sup> Though the text says Greece (*Ἑλλάδα*, 20.2), most commentators agree that this is not the provincial designation, but the popular term, and that Paul ends up in Corinth. Witherington, *Acts*, 601; Bruce, *Acts*, 423.

leaders/elders in each location. He encourages and exhorts them (*παρακαλέσας*, 20.2), likely sharing with them what God has recently done in Ephesus and Asia, and how they can imitate that regional missional strategy in their own locales.<sup>66</sup>

Paul is threatened by the Jews in Corinth, and decides to go back overland through Macedonia, rather than sailing from Corinth back to Syria (20.3). This means that he visits all of the churches in that area again, checking on their progress, and strengthening them.<sup>67</sup>

### 13.3.2 Paul's Co-Workers and Missionary Teams

Three episodes around this point in the narrative shed light on the missional team of co-workers which Paul develops. Before he leaves Ephesus, he sends two of his 'helpers' (*διακονούντων* – deacons, ministers), Timothy and Erastus, on ahead of him, presumably to help with the collection he is taking for the Jerusalem church (19.22).<sup>68</sup> There are two others with Paul, travelling companions (*συνεκδήμους*) from Macedonia named Gaius and Aristarchus, who are seized with Paul during the Ephesian riot (19.29).<sup>69</sup> Paul is not travelling alone, but has multiple companions with him, helping him in his mission.

These are probably two different ways of describing similar roles: helpers/co-workers (*διακονία*), and travelling companions abroad (*συνέκδημος*). These four fellow travellers are converts from four different recently founded Pauline churches, and are therefore the direct fruit of his missional labour.<sup>70</sup> They have been recruited or appointed to travel with Paul, and to assist him in his missionary efforts. This shows Paul intentionally mentoring future church

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<sup>66</sup> For Paul (and Luke), such recent and resounding success in Asia surely needs to be shared everywhere.

<sup>67</sup> This visit is Paul's third to each of these churches: once to found them, and twice to strengthen them.

<sup>68</sup> This may be the same Erastus of Rom 16.23, the treasurer of Ephesus, or in 2 Tim 4.20, in Corinth.

<sup>69</sup> *Συνέκδημος* is only used here and in 2 Cor 8.19, which speaks of an unnamed travelling companion of Paul, who has been appointed by the churches to travel with him, and particularly to help administer the offering. This could be one of these two, or one of those mentioned in Acts 20.4. *Συνέκδημος* comes from *σύν* (with, a marker of accompaniment and association), and *ἐκδημος* (abroad), and means those who are with Paul abroad, on a long journey. *Ἐκδημέω* means to leave on a long journey, or to be in a strange land (cf. 2 Cor 5.8,9).

<sup>70</sup> Timothy is from Lystra, Gaius is from Derbe (20.4, though Paul seems to say he is from Macedonia here, which could indicate a separate Gaius, or only be referring to Aristarchus), Aristarchus is from Macedonia (Thessalonica, 20.4), and Erastus is probably from Corinth (Rom 16.23). It is significant that there are four co-workers here, from four different key cities where Paul has recently planted missional churches.

leaders and missionaries, allowing them to live with him, build relationship with him, and learn from him, in a rabbi/student relationship.<sup>71</sup> In this way, Paul continuously expands the leadership base of the early church, even as he goes about the practical responsibilities of the mission. These people are also surely a great help in the demands of Paul's ministry.

Acts 20.4 lists seven Pauline co-workers, who are accompanying him:<sup>72</sup> Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea, Aristarchus<sup>73</sup> and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe,<sup>74</sup> Timothy from Lystra,<sup>75</sup> and Tychicus<sup>76</sup> and Trophimus<sup>77</sup> from the province of Asia. 'The most obvious feature of the list is its inclusion of representatives from the diverse geographical areas in which Paul worked. The passage testifies to the complexity of the Pauline mission.'<sup>78</sup> As Paul travels, he builds close relationships with many of his converts. Of these, he selects some of the most promising to travel with him and partner with him in his ministry. It seems that most of the churches he establishes are willing to give him one or a few full-time workers, who represent that church and area, and assist Paul in his work.

These co-workers form a network of trainees and junior leaders in the Pauline mission, and have various responsibilities, including assisting Paul, extending the mission, collecting offerings, delivering letters, and helping to care for the churches. Some are

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<sup>71</sup> Cf. D. Daube, 'Responsibilities of Master and Disciples in the Gospels', *NTS* 19 (1972): 1-15.

<sup>72</sup> On the seven of 20.4, see Pervo, *Acts*, 508-9. Scholarly consensus views these persons as delegates of local Pauline churches who are bearing the collection for Jerusalem; Haenchen, *Acts*, 581; Witherington, *Acts*, 603.

<sup>73</sup> Aristarchus is mentioned in multiple other places: Acts 19.29 (with Paul during the Ephesian riot, and therefore would have been known to the Colossians); 27.2 (with Paul when he leaves by sea for Rome, and presumably for the entire shipwreck and journey to Rome); Col 4.10 (a 'fellow prisoner' of Paul in Rome); and Phlm 24 (a 'fellow worker' of Paul). Aristarchus must become a close friend and trusted co-worker, as he is with Paul from Ephesus through Paul's Roman imprisonment, providing support and encouragement.

<sup>74</sup> Probably not the same as the Gaius in Rom 16.23, and 1 Cor 1.14, who is from Corinth, and is likely Gaius Titius Justus (Acts 18.7), Paul's host while he stays in Corinth.

<sup>75</sup> Timothy may represent multiple churches by this point (1 Cor 16.10-11; Phil 2.19-23). He is one of Paul's most trusted co-workers, and his beloved son in the faith (1 Tim 1.18; 2 Tim 1.2; 2.1).

<sup>76</sup> Paul later sends Tychicus to Ephesus (Eph 6.21, 'the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord'), and to Colossae (Col 4.7, 'beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord'), as his representative, to carry messages and information directly from him. 2 Tim 4.12 confirms this. Later, Paul likely sends Tychicus to Crete to relieve Titus, so that Titus can come to Paul (Tit 3.12). This indicates that Tychicus is in Paul's 'inner circle', and a trusted Pauline representative, capable of leading a church.

<sup>77</sup> Trophimus is with Paul in Jerusalem (Acts 21.29, which also reveals he is an Ephesian, and probably a Gentile), and later Paul leaves him sick at Miletus (2 Tim 4.20). It is significant that Paul travels with Gentiles in his inner circle of ministry associates.

<sup>78</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 355.

apparently more permanent, such as Timothy, Titus, and Silas, and often go on to oversee churches and regional mission bases. Many are more temporary, but still become trusted Pauline co-labourers. As they travel, minister, and endure difficulty together, they become a tight-knit group, with a life-long bond and commitment to one another. These leaders also carry on Paul's mission and message once he is imprisoned, and no longer able to directly lead the mission (21.33-28.31). By travelling and training in this way, Paul continually empowers the next generations of leaders in the movement, and equips them with his distinctive values, enabling them to continue moving forward even after he is gone. This deliberate recruitment and development of co-workers is one of the most innovative aspects of the Pauline church-planting movement, and gives it a degree of permanence and sustainability it would not have otherwise had.

### *13.3.3 Another Urban Congregation and Example of Divine Power*

Paul sails from Philippi, and after five days arrives in Troas, where he stays for seven days (20.6). Troas is another strategic Roman city, which became a Roman colony under Augustus: *Colonia Augusta Troadensium*.<sup>79</sup> The church in Troas is possibly a congregation which Paul founded previously on his way to Macedonia (20.1), or earlier when he passed through Troas (16.8,11), though Luke does not mention this.<sup>80</sup> 'Here we have another example of the Pauline urban missionary strategy, establishing congregations in major cities in the Empire, particularly in Roman colonies such as Troas, Philippi, or Corinth.'<sup>81</sup>

Paul must know this church at Troas, for he speaks a long time to them (20.7-12).<sup>82</sup>

Around midnight Eutychus falls asleep,<sup>83</sup> and falls from a third story window, dying on impact. Paul throws himself on him, and he returns to life. This story re-emphasizes the

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<sup>79</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 605. For more on Troas, Trebilco, 'Asia', 357-359; Hemer, 'Alexandria Troas', 79-112.

<sup>80</sup> See 2 Cor 2.12-13; 2 Tim 4.13.

<sup>81</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 606.

<sup>82</sup> No doubt he was telling stories of missionary exploits in various places, and of what God was doing throughout the world. It is easy to see Paul getting carried away in his excitement about this.

<sup>83</sup> *Εὐτυχός* ironically means 'lucky', or 'good fortune'; this humour is an attempt to lighten up the narrative.

divine power flowing through Paul's life, presenting him as a great leader, equal in authority to Peter (9.36-43). This is the last miracle Paul performs as a free man in Acts (cf. 28.5-6).

#### 13.3.4 *The Miletus Farewell Speech*

Paul travels on foot to Assos, and then the entire group sails to Mitylene, Kios, Samos, and Miletus (20.13-15).<sup>84</sup> Paul decides to avoid Ephesus, because he is in a hurry to get back to Jerusalem by Pentecost (20.16).<sup>85</sup> So he calls the Ephesian elders to join him at Miletus (20.17). This sets the stage for Paul's third and final major speech in Acts.<sup>86</sup>

##### 13.3.4.1 *The Priority of Empowering Local Church Leadership*

Paul's speech in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch (13.16-41) should be understood as a model for his Jewish synagogue-based proclamation throughout his travels, and allows Luke to only make reference to these settings in other places, rather than describing the message in detail.<sup>87</sup> Similarly, Paul's speech at Athens (17.22-31) should be seen as a model of how Paul evangelizes a Gentile pagan audience, and it should be assumed that he takes a similar approach in other comparable settings.<sup>88</sup> Paul's third major speech in Acts to the Ephesian elders (20.18-35) is also a 'model speech' to his third type of audience: established churches and church leaders whom he knows personally.<sup>89</sup> This speech shows the sorts of things Paul does and says when he visits cities where churches have been planted, and 'strengthens' those

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<sup>84</sup> Mitylene is the chief city of the island of Lesbos; Kios is the island where Homer was born; Samos is the birthplace of Pythagoras. A smaller craft would hug the coast line and put into port at night when the winds die down; Luke seems to be giving a daily account of this sea journey. Witherington, *Acts*, 609.

<sup>85</sup> The depth of his relationships in Ephesus and accepted cultural hospitality requirements would have forced him to stay there for quite some time, had he actually visited the city. He may also want to avoid his enemies in the city as well. This would be true in most of the cities he passes through which have a church he had helped to establish, though he has spent the most time in Ephesus.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Walton, *Leadership*, 17-32, review of key works on the speech; 52-93, analysis and exegesis.

<sup>87</sup> Such as Salamis (13.5), Iconium (14.1), Philippi (16.13, the place of prayer), Thessalonica (17.2), Berea (17.10), Corinth (18.4), Ephesus (19.8).

<sup>88</sup> Such as Lystra and Derbe. The mini speech at Lystra (14.8-18) has thematic parallels to the Athens speech, esp. in natural theology. Luke reports on the Athens speech in detail, because he is presenting it as the model.

<sup>89</sup> It may not have always been quite as emotional, though Paul's bonds with many of the other churches and leaders must have also run quite deep by this time. E.g., he has been through Iconium and the other churches in the Galatian region at least four total times by the end of his third journey: once to establish them (14.1), once as immediate follow-up, and to appoint elders (14.21-21), once at the beginning of his second journey, a year or so later (16.1-5), and once at the beginning of his third journey, another four years later (18.23). This many visits over so many years would inevitably lead to quite a deep level of trust and relationship.



churches, filling in narrative details that have been lacking in the narrative up to this point.<sup>90</sup>

Paul's priority is to equip and build up the local leadership of each church, because he knows that if they are doing well, the churches themselves will flourish and grow; strong local leaders inevitably result in thriving local churches.

This speech also confirms the strategic element of Paul's mission in 14.23: in every city where a church is planted, a local eldership team is installed to lead that church. The strength of 14.23, 'in every church' (κατ' ἐκκλησίαν), and the way it is taken for granted here that the Ephesian church has an eldership structure indicates that this is Paul's normative practice, and that each of the Pauline churches has a similar presbyterial body of leadership.<sup>91</sup>

#### 13.3.4.2 A Life worth Imitating

Paul's speech to the Ephesian elders shows the tenderness he feels towards them, and the strategic way he seeks to build them up, using his own life and ministry as a primary example for them to follow. As the only extended speech in Acts specifically addressed to Christians, it is no accident that this speech sounds more like the Paul of his own letters than any other part of Acts.<sup>92</sup> 'It is unmistakably Paul, and a Paul who presents himself to this community in terms remarkably like the ones we recognize in the letters we know Paul himself wrote to his communities...Luke accurately represents not only a number of distinctively Pauline themes, but does so in language which is specifically and verifiably Paul's.'<sup>93</sup>

Paul begins by reminding his hearers of his way of life while amongst them, and the consistent way he proclaimed the gospel to both Jews and Greeks (20.18-21). He speaks of

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<sup>90</sup> Paul incorporates these pastoral visits into his travel itineraries, because he is committed to these new churches growing in a healthy way: 14.21-25; 15.41; 16.1-5; 18.23; 19.21-22; 20.1-3.

<sup>91</sup> Paul himself generally uses the term overseer (ἐπίσκοπος, Phil 1.1; cf. Acts 20.28); cf. Tit 1.5-7, which uses ἐπίσκοπος and πρεσβύτερος interchangeably. For πρεσβύτερος, cf. 1 Tim 5.1,2,17,19 (all of which are about this same church at Ephesus); Tit 1.5; Jas 5.14; 1 Pet 5.1; 2 Jn 1; 3 Jn 1.

<sup>92</sup> See Witherington, *Acts*, 610 for a brief treatment of the similarities, and the differences. The letters of Paul that have been preserved are not evangelistic, but are pastoral and exhortational in nature, because they are addressed to believers and churches. But most of the Pauline speeches and activity that Luke records in Acts are the opposite, addressed to non-believers. This helps to explain some of the apparent differences.

<sup>93</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 367. Cf. Walton, *Leadership*, 140-85, for a detailed treatment of the many parallels between this speech and 1 Thessalonians; there are less parallels with Ephesians, 186-92, and 2 Timothy, 192-8.

‘teaching them publicly and from house to house’ (διδάξαι ὑμᾶς δημοσίᾳ καὶ κατ’ οἴκους), which points to two separate instructional strategies: one that is public, open to anybody, and more evangelistic in nature, and one that is house to house, focused on building up the body of believers (20.20).<sup>94</sup> Paul urges the Ephesian leaders to imitate his way of life in three particular areas: persevering through trial and persecution (20.19), building up the church (20.20), and evangelistically proclaiming the Word continuously (20.21).<sup>95</sup> These three areas also reveal Paul’s personal ministry values and priorities.<sup>96</sup>

Paul turns to the future, revealing that he is determined to go to Jerusalem, knowing that prison and hardship await him there (20.22-23). Here he articulates his mission statement: ‘I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God’ (διαμαρτύρασθαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ, 20.24). Paul is displaying a supreme example of what it means to selflessly follow Christ, and sacrificially engage in God’s mission, and he is urging the Ephesian elders to imitate him in this.

Paul says he will not see any of them again, and that he is innocent of the blood of all men, for he has not hesitated to proclaim to them the full will of God (20.25-27). ‘In essence, Paul is arguing that he has successfully discharged his duties in Ephesus, and that therefore they are now responsible for heeding his example and teachings on their own.’<sup>97</sup> He is urging his audience to prepare for the future and act in ways that will help them to fulfil their calling.

Paul then directly exhorts the Ephesian elders to discharge the duties of their position of leadership within the church, and particularly to guard against attacks (20.28-30). He tells them to guard themselves first, and then to guard the flock that has been entrusted to their

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<sup>94</sup> As we have seen previously, this ‘house to house’ structure was the basic structure of these early churches, for their private meetings and community gatherings. The lecture hall of Tyrannus was likely the public venue.

<sup>95</sup> See 1 Cor 4.16; 11.1 (imitate me, as I imitate Christ); 1 Thes 1.6; 2.14; 2 Thes 3.7,9.

<sup>96</sup> Luke is presenting Paul as a great leader, who leads by example, and whose life is worth emulating.

<sup>97</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 614.

care.<sup>98</sup> Once again, he holds himself up as an example worth imitating, particularly in the way that he continually admonished them over a three year period (20.31).<sup>99</sup>

#### *13.3.4.3 The Value of the Local Church, and Its Leaders*

Paul demonstrates his ecclesiastical understanding when he speaks of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood (20.28). It is not Paul's church, nor does it belong to its leaders; the church is God's, and he purchased it when Christ died on the cross.<sup>100</sup> Paul sees each individual community of Christ-followers as having been personally purchased by Christ on the cross. This shows Paul's great love for the church, and his great belief in its worth and potential. It is worth the death of Christ himself. The implication is that this is why Paul has devoted his life so wholeheartedly to establishing, building, and developing these individual local congregations, which Christ has died for. Paul understands how valuable and important the individual local church is.

This is also an explicit reference to the cross, which is rare in Acts.<sup>101</sup> Luke waits to include it here, because he wants the reader to understand that this is the real climax to his story, not just theologically, but also in terms of practical missional significance.

Empowering the Ephesian (and other) elders to carry the mission forward is the most strategic thing Paul can do at this point, particularly as he moves toward his own captivity. All of the churches Paul has established have been possible only because of the cross, and that same power will also protect and guide them in the future.

Paul then commits the elders to God and to the word of his grace, which can build them up (*οἰκοδομῆσαι*) and give them an inheritance among those who are sanctified (20.32). Paul has committed the church to the care of these leaders, and now he commits the leaders to the care of God. Ultimately, the church and its leaders are in the hands of God, and Paul

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<sup>98</sup> The elders must care for themselves first, so they can be healthy leaders, and then for the churches they lead.

<sup>99</sup> The theme of this speech is the way that Paul points to his own life, and challenges his hearers to imitate him.

<sup>100</sup> This saying must be primarily about the individual church in Ephesus, and not the universal church, because these elders could not shepherd the worldwide church.

<sup>101</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 624.

trusts that God will care for them, and ensure that they prosper and flourish. Paul's responsibilities with the Ephesians are complete; they are now God's responsibility.

Paul reminds them how he supplied his own needs while among them, and worked hard to help the weak (20.33-34). He finishes his speech with a quotation from the ultimate authority, Jesus: 'it is more blessed to give than to receive' (20.35).<sup>102</sup> This serves as a 'proof' and summary of all that Paul has said: the Ephesian elders are called not to receive, but to give their lives away for the sake of the churches that have been entrusted to them. Then he kneels down with them all and prays, committing them to God (20.36).<sup>103</sup>

#### *13.3.4.4 Deep Relationships – An Emotional (and Strategic) Goodbye*

The elders' reaction is full of emotion and pathos, showing how greatly they love Paul: 'They all wept aloud (*ικανός δὲ κλαυθμὸς ἐγένετο πάντων*) as they embraced Paul around the neck (*ἐπιπεσόντες ἐπὶ τὸν τράχηλον τοῦ Παύλου*) and kissed him repeatedly (*κατεφίλουν αὐτόν*), with a feeling of deep anguish' (*ὀδυνώμενοι μάλιστα*, 20.37-38).<sup>104</sup> Here is their spiritual father, the one who has brought the gospel to them, and changed their lives. He lived among them for nearly three years, personally trained many of them, and they are attempting to model their lives after Paul. By using such emotive words, Luke is highlighting the close friendship between Paul and the Ephesian elders.<sup>105</sup> Luke also notes that the most difficult thing for them is when Paul says they would not see him again (20.25,38).

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<sup>102</sup> Although this saying is not found in the Gospels, it could have been a saying of Jesus, or at least the earliest Christian community. Cf. Lk 6.35-38; Mk 10.45. For more on this, see Witherington, *Acts*, 626.

<sup>103</sup> C. F. D. Moule notes, 'this is Paul, not some other speaker; and he is not evangelizing but recalling an already evangelized community to its deepest insights. In others words, the situation, like the theology, is precisely that of a Pauline epistle, not preliminary evangelism', 'The Christology of Acts', *Studies in Luke-Acts*, L. E. Keck, J. L. Martyn, eds. (London: SPCK, 1968): 159-85, citing 171.

<sup>104</sup> Ὀδυνάω is a strong word which means to suffer intense pain, agony, anguish, torment, distress. Cf. Lk 2.48, when Jesus' parents are looking for him in anguish, and Lk 16.24-25, where Lazarus is twice 'in agony in the flames' (*ὀδυνῶμαι ἐν τῇ φλογί*). It is unique to Luke-Acts in the NT, and emphasizes the depth of emotion in this farewell scene.

<sup>105</sup> For such outbursts of emotion, even in sober historical accounts, cf. Philo, *Embassy to Gaius*, 243; Josephus, *War*, 2.402. Johnson, *Acts*, 366.

Luke is claiming that this close relational connection is an essential strategic reason for the successful advance of the church. This is emphasized in their emotional farewell, from which they had to ‘tear/drag themselves away’ (*ἀποσπασθέντας*), so great was their love for one another (21.1). Paul is no distant or detached leader; he has built heart-felt friendships with many of these younger leaders, and this relational leadership style has strengthened the mission, commitment, and longevity of the churches which Paul has begun. Their friendship and relational attachment will cause these leaders to be fiercely loyal to Paul and his mission, even after he is gone. It will ensure the long-term viability and sustainability of the Pauline mission in a way that no amount of strategy or inspirational vision ever could.

This emotional farewell is the last substantial episode that Luke records of Paul’s missionary journeys. This is no accident. Luke is highlighting the importance and significance of such an encounter, which is the culmination of Paul’s missionary journeys. When Paul first departed in 13.4, there were no Pauline churches, and he was not even sure where he was going, or what he would do when he arrived. Twelve years later, there is a significant network of new Pauline churches stretching across massive areas of the Empire.

Luke wants the reader to understand that this has not simply been a mechanical or ‘strategic’ process. It has been an emotional journey, of exhilarating highs and devastating lows. He emphasizes this through Paul mentioning twice that he ‘served the Lord with tears’ in this speech (20.19,31).<sup>106</sup> Paul has poured his life out for these people, and the soberness of this reality is tangible in their encounter.<sup>107</sup> His emotional connection with the local church leaders is one of the forces driving the momentum of the entire movement, and readers of Acts can discern this from the many emotion-laden words which Luke uses.

It is possible that this group of ‘Ephesian elders’ includes the key leaders of other new fellowships scattered across Asia, who have been commissioned and sent out from Ephesus.

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<sup>106</sup> This emotional/passionate portrait of Paul comports with his own letters (cf. e.g., 2 Cor 2.1-4; 1 Cor 2.1-5).

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Phil 2.17; 2 Tim 4.6.

Many of these Ephesian leaders are involved in the expansion of the regional mission, and would go on to plant, lead and oversee fellowships across the province, and beyond. These are the emerging leaders of a vibrant church-planting movement, and Paul imparts something strategic to them that would move them forward in the mission: 'The church-planting Paul teaches the key themes of Christian leadership to the Ephesian church leaders, who will later pass the torch on to their successors.'<sup>108</sup> His exhortations to them would stick with them for a lifetime. These are his parting words, and the importance of the occasion is not lost on them.

#### *13.3.4.5 The Rhetorical Function of the Farewell Speech*

Paul's speech to the Ephesian elders is significant to Luke on multiple levels. It functions as the dramatic climax of his missionary narrative, and much of Acts culminates with this grand scene. It 'enables [Luke] to deliver the final "insider" interpretation of Paul...so that the reader is able to grasp "how Paul was" for his churches – in effect supplying the sort of intimate portrait that the frantic pace of travels and tribulations had not till now allowed.'<sup>109</sup> It also summarizes many facets of the missional strategies which Luke advocates in Acts.

Luke also reveals his underlying rhetorical purposes in Acts most translucently in this speech. Luke wants his readers to put themselves in the position of the Ephesian elders. When Paul speaks to these leaders in Acts, Luke is speaking to Christian readers in later generations, all potential church leaders and missionaries themselves. The message Paul speaks is the message Luke is conveying to the reader. This message can be summarized in this way: 'imitate Paul'.<sup>110</sup> The farewell speech is really a Lukan tribute and accolade to Paul's life and ministry, and this is precisely what Luke holds up to his readers to emulate.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Walton, *Leadership*, 202.

<sup>109</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 366.

<sup>110</sup> In a speech totalling 18 verses (20.18-35), only two verses do not have some explicit reference to Paul (20.28,30), and those two are clearly about things which Paul has modelled for his hearers in his personal life (shepherding and guarding the flock of God).

<sup>111</sup> Walton, *Leadership*, 99-136, shows that Luke draws deliberate parallels between Paul's leadership and that of Jesus in his Gospel. Cf. his summary of Christian leadership in this speech, 135-136, and his conclusion about the Miletus speech: 'This represents far more than a collection of vague platitudes; it offers a dynamic,

The 'Farewell Discourse' is in reality a kind of paraenetic discourse, in which the main point is the instruction of the listener in certain moral values. As always in such discourses, there is the presentation of a model that they are to remember and to imitate, with the specific maxims making the example more explicit. In the present case, *all of Paul's actions and dispositions are intended to communicate an example that the elders after him (and the readers of Luke-Acts) can imitate* (20.31,35).<sup>112</sup>

#### **Table 13.4 Luke's Message to His Readers in the Miletus Farewell Speech (20.18-35)**

- Imitate all that you have observed of Paul's life and ministry throughout Acts (20.18).
- Serve the Lord with humility and tears, enduring trials as the Lord's servant (20.19).
- Teach what is profitable, in public evangelistic settings, and in private from house to house (20.20).
- Solemnly preach the gospel of repentance and faith in Christ to everyone, both Jews and Greeks (20.21).
- Trust God in all things, and follow and obey the Spirit, even when the future appears uncertain or ominous; it is okay to suffer for Christ (20.22-23).
- Do not attempt to preserve your own life or comfort, but focus on fulfilling your calling, and completing the evangelistic and pastoral ministry which you have received from Jesus (20.24).
- Live in such a way that nobody can hold anything against you, always giving people the opportunity to receive Christ, and to know what his purposes are for their life (20.25-27).
- Guard your personal well-being, as this is essential to your leadership and evangelism; also guard the whole flock which you oversee, understanding that the church is so precious that Christ gave his life for it (20.28).
- Beware of divisive and perverse people, who will arise even from within the church and attempt to divide and destroy it (20.29-31).
- Though this will be difficult, you are in God's hands, and he is able to build you up, protect you, and lead you into the fullness of your inheritance; he is committed to you and to his church (20.32).
- Do not covet others' possessions, or depend on others' generosity, but work hard to provide for yourself, and even for your co-workers (20.33-34).
- Remember to help the weak, and to follow Christ's instructions that it is better to give than to receive; your calling is not to receive selfishly from others, but to give away selflessly to others (20.35).

Luke's ultimate purpose in Acts is to call his readers to action: to inspire and activate a new generation of Christian leaders and missionaries, and equip them to take up this calling effectively. He uses this speech to the Ephesian elders to express this most directly. All of his main themes are present in this climactic episode. Luke is saying that Paul is the ultimate example of what a missionary is and does, so everything he has written about Paul in Acts is worth imitating.<sup>113</sup> All of the Pauline missional strategies elucidated in this work are not just fascinating practices, but have been described in Acts so that they can be emulated.

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sharply focused model of Christian leadership rooted in Luke's understanding of Jesus, in contrast with other approaches to leadership available in the ancient world (Luke 22.25)', 136.

<sup>112</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 367. Cf. Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2. 250: 'Paul is being presented as the ideal church leader who fulfills Jesus' commands and therefore is an example to others.'

<sup>113</sup> Luke also goes to great lengths in this episode to demonstrate how close Paul's relationship with these elders is, and is therefore encouraging his readers to emulate this relational leadership style.

Paul has a similar emphasis in his letters. He twice instructs the Corinthian believers to imitate him: ‘I exhort you, be *imitators* (μιμηταί) of me...be *imitators* (μιμηταί) of me, just as I also am of Christ’ (1 Cor 4.16; 11.1). He tells the Thessalonians that, ‘You also became *imitators* (μιμηταί) of us’ (1 Thes 1.6), and explains, ‘how you ought to *imitate* (μιμεῖσθαι) our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you...in order to offer ourselves as a *model* (τύπον – pattern for imitation) for you, so that you would *follow/imitate* us’ (μιμεῖσθαι ἡμᾶς, 2 Thes 3.7,9).<sup>114</sup> Luke is using a thoroughly Pauline motif in the speech to the Ephesian elders: ‘imitate/mimic my life, faith, and ministry, as I imitate Christ’.<sup>115</sup>

### 13.3.5 Final Stops and Arrival in Jerusalem

After their emotional farewell to the Ephesian elders, Paul and his companions sail to Cos, Rhodes, Patara, and Tyre (21.1-3). In Tyre they stay with the Tyrian disciples for a week (21.4).<sup>116</sup> They beg Paul not to go to Jerusalem, but he is determined (21.5). There is another emotional farewell scene at Tyre, as the men and their wives and children escort Paul and his companions to the beach, kneel together on the soft sand to pray, and say farewell (21.6).<sup>117</sup> Paul and his co-workers sail to Ptolemais, where they greet the brothers and stay for a day (21.7),<sup>118</sup> before travelling to Caesarea, and staying in the home of Philip the evangelist, and his four unmarried ‘prophets’ daughters (21.8-9).<sup>119</sup> Here again Paul is warned about impending trouble facing him in Jerusalem, but he will not be dissuaded (21.10-14).<sup>120</sup>

<sup>114</sup> Μιμέομαι: ‘imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises’ (Heb 6.12); ‘be imitators of God’ (Eph 5.1); ‘you became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea’ (1 Thes 2.14). Μιμητής: ‘imitate their [your leaders’] faith’ (Heb 13.7). Cf. Josephus, *Ant.*, 1.68,109; 6.347; 8.251; 12.203; *Against Apion*, 2.257; Philo, *On the Virtues*, 66; Xen., *Mem.*, 1.6.3.

<sup>115</sup> This is the ultimate responsibility of a disciple: to imitate, mimic, or follow his or her leader/rabbi.

<sup>116</sup> The origins of this Christian community are uncertain, though Roloff, *Apostel.*, 309, attributes the Tyrian church to the scattering and ensuing mission of 11.19.

<sup>117</sup> This scene emphasizes the support and admiration for Paul and his missional work among the churches.

<sup>118</sup> This entire final itinerary indicates a regional mission approach, likely based in Jerusalem or Caesarea, as all of these surrounding towns have churches.

<sup>119</sup> We last saw Philip in 8.40 in Caesarea, and he is still there now, one of the key (founding) leaders of the local church in that area.

<sup>120</sup> Paul is not hard-hearted throughout this journey – his tenderness to the people shows in 21.13: ‘why are you weeping and breaking my heart?’ But he is determined to obey God, and knows his destiny lies in Jerusalem.



Paul finally arrives in Jerusalem (21.15), and his third missionary journey is complete. He stays in the house of Mnason of Cyprus, an ‘early/original disciple’ (ἀρχαίω μαθητῆ, 21.16).<sup>121</sup> Mnason brings the journey cycle to a narrative completion, for what began in Cyprus multiple years ago (13.4), now ends in the home of a Cypriot in Jerusalem (21.16).<sup>122</sup>

### **13.4 Conclusions**

In Paul’s third missionary journey his missional strategies come to maturity. At Ephesus a regional missional movement is born, which impacts all of Asia. All of the strategies previously employed are still in operation, but here Paul realizes his ultimate goal: the mobilization of a missionary people movement with a large geographical scope.

Luke uses Paul’s farewell speech to the Ephesian elders to summarize his missional call to his readers. He has sought to inspire them through various missional stimuli (the why). He has sought to show them the missional structures they are to employ (the what). And here he equips them, by presenting missional strategies in Paul’s missionary journeys (the how). It is here that Luke also shows most transparently his rhetorical purpose in writing Acts: he is calling his generation to missional action, specifically by urging them to imitate Paul and his many missionary exploits.

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<sup>121</sup> Perhaps Mnason was converted on Pauls’ first journey to Cyprus (13.4-12), or earlier by Barnabas (4.36-36). See Weiser, *Apostel.*, 2.596 for a discussion of Mnason’s identity and location.

<sup>122</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 635. It is likely that Paul would have returned home to Antioch, had he not been captured in Jerusalem.

## CHAPTER 14 – SUMMARY OF PAUL’S MISSIONAL STRATEGY

Certain strategic themes have become apparent in Luke’s account of Paul’s missionary journeys. This chapter summarizes Paul’s overall missional strategy and methodology.<sup>1</sup>

### *14.1 Strategic Initial Planning*

#### *14.1.1 Direction and Travel*

Paul has to first decide where he will go as a travelling missionary. He has multiple directional indicators. The first is the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which he relies upon whenever possible, and which sometimes even changes his plans rather abruptly.<sup>2</sup> Luke emphasizes multiple times that it is not Paul who is leading these missionary expeditions, but it is the Spirit of God himself. Paul’s primary job is to follow.

However, Paul also goes to places where he or his travelling companions have pre-existing relational connections,<sup>3</sup> or for which he can obtain a letter of recommendation from mutual friends.<sup>4</sup> Paul also follows existing transport and trade routes, and at times, seems to simply follow the best road and sea-routes to wherever the next destination happens to be.<sup>5</sup>

#### *14.1.2 Expect Persecution*

Paul also resigns himself to opposition affecting his travel itinerary. He frequently alters his plans, or flees to another nearby place, in an effort to avoid personal violence or the harm of

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<sup>1</sup> For clarity’s sake, the strategies identified in chs. 11-13 of this work will be separated into broad categories, roughly following the missional progression found in Acts. In an attempt to avoid being overly repetitive, the relevant passages and points of in-depth discussion in the previous three chapters will only be referenced. Because part 4 follows Acts 13-21 verse by verse, the detailed discussion of any verse or topic is easy to find.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Acts 13.4: Paul is sent by the Holy Spirit from Antioch; 16.6-10: the Holy Spirit prevents him from entering Asia and Bithynia, and leads him to Macedonia; 19.21: he ‘purposed in the Spirit’ to go to Jerusalem; 20.22,23: Paul is ‘bound by the Spirit’ to go to Jerusalem; and 21.12-14: ‘may the Lord’s will be done’.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Acts 13.4-12, the first mission, in Cyprus, and Barnabas’ connection by birth and upbringing with Cyprus (Acts 4.36-37), as well as the Antioch church’s connection with Cyprus (11.20-22, men of Cyprus and Cyrene founded the church at Antioch); they choose Cyprus as an initial destination because of existing relationships.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Acts 13.7-14, and Sergius Paulus’ connections with Pisidian Antioch. It is likely that they choose this city next because of Sergius Paulus’ existing connections. Cf. also 18.27 for a parallel example of writing a letter of recommendation. It is feasible that as Paul goes from city to city, he often arrives with recommendations and relational connections with people he had previously met in other locales, particularly as the synagogue social networks are linked across a region. The early churches are also connected with one another at this point.

<sup>5</sup> This can be documented throughout Acts, though Paul sometimes deviates from the largest and most well-travelled roads. Cf. the *Via Sebaste*, which ran through Perga, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra (Acts 13.13-14.23; 16.1-5; 18.23); and the *Via Egnatia*, which ran from Rome through Philippi and beyond (16.12; 20.6). For more details, see French, ‘Roman Roads’, 52-58.

the new community which has been established.<sup>6</sup> Paul displays remarkable resilience. If he is driven out of one city, he entrusts those people to God, moves to the next, and continues to proclaim the word. Paul's missional planning is flexible; when persecution changes the course, he accepts this as the Spirit's leading, and adjusts accordingly.<sup>7</sup>

### *14.1.3 Maximum Impact through Urban Centres*

As Paul travels, he looks for places where he can make a maximum impact, and realizes that this is generally larger urban centres, and particularly capital cities, such as Thessalonica, Ephesus, and Corinth. Such cities exercise a disproportionate amount of influence on their surrounding regions, and if Paul can establish churches in them, their impact will resonate out from those centres widely, multiplying his efforts exponentially. Paul basically *only* visits fairly significant cities in Acts.<sup>8</sup>

#### *14.1.3.1 Where the People Are*

Paul's urban focus is not unique to Christianity among new missionary religions:

All ambitious missionary movements are, or soon become, urban. If the goal is to 'make disciples of all nations', missionaries need to go where there are many potential converts, which is precisely what Paul did. His missionary journeys took him to major cities such as Antioch, Corinth, and Athens, with only occasional visits to smaller communities such as Iconium and Laodicea. No mention is made of him preaching in the countryside.<sup>9</sup>

If a person wants to reach many people, it is logical to go to the large cities, for this is where potential converts are most highly concentrated.

#### *14.1.3.2 Urban Attitudes toward Rural People*

Another reason why early Christians focus on cities is their attitudes about rural people. As Stark explains, 'It was several centuries before the early church made serious efforts to

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Acts 13.50-51; 14.5-6: they 'fled' (*κατέφυγον*) to Lystra and Derbe after the persecution in Iconium; 14.19-20; 16.40; 17.7-10,13-14; 20.1. There is a pattern throughout the missionary journeys – in nearly every city he visits, Paul moves on to the next destination when persecution breaks out and drives him away.

<sup>7</sup> In Acts, Luke implies that Paul understands that God is sovereign, and trusts that he will work through even the persecution of his enemies, to lead and guide him to the next place.

<sup>8</sup> E.g., Syrian Antioch, Tarsus, Pisidian Antioch, Salamis, Paphos, Ephesus, Troas, Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth. Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, and Berea are likely somewhat smaller, but are still regional centres that exercise influence over their surrounding areas.

<sup>9</sup> Stark, *Cities of God*, 25-26.

convert the rural peasantry – although many were converted by friends and kinfolk returning from urban sojourns. Fully sharing the views of their non-Christian neighbors, many early Christians dismissed rural people as subhuman brutes.’<sup>10</sup>

#### *14.1.3.3 The Strategic Significance of Cities in an Urban Empire*

The Roman Empire is a remarkable epoch, for it came as close to an urban culture as any people have come until eighteenth century Europe, largely because cultural and political influence was concentrated in the cities.<sup>11</sup> ‘The cities were where the power was...where changes could occur.’<sup>12</sup> By establishing themselves in urban centres, Christians found political influence far greater than their size relative to the population of the Empire. ‘Even as late as the fourth century the overwhelming majority of Christians lived in cities; hence their political importance probably was far greater than their total number might suggest – which no doubt played a role in Constantine’s seeking the support of the early church.’<sup>13</sup>

As Pearson summarizes, ‘Christianity arose in a time and place in history when cities, great and small, were in their ascendancy. Thereafter most of the greatest cities of the ancient world either disappeared altogether or lay in ruins.’<sup>14</sup> This urban ascendancy gave rise to the

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<sup>10</sup> Stark, *Cities of God*, 26. ‘The peasantry of the countryside were beyond the pale, a tribe apart, outsiders. Such attitudes underpinned the failure of the urban Christian communities to reach out and spread the gospel in the countryside...For them the countryside simply did not exist as a zone for missionary enterprise. After all, there was nothing in the New Testament about spreading the Word to the beasts of the field’, R. Fletcher, *The Barbarian Conversion: From Paganism to Christianity* (New York: Holt, 1997): 16.

<sup>11</sup> Even though about 90 percent of its population lived on farms or in rural villages, Rome should still be considered to be an urban empire. G. Sjöberg, *The Preindustrial City* (New York: Free Press, 1960).

<sup>12</sup> Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 15. The rural ‘population hovered so barely above subsistence level that no one dared risk change’, R. MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984): 27.

<sup>13</sup> Stark, *Rise of Christianity*, 10-11. ‘Because the Christian population was concentrated and well organized, it could have had far greater impact on the politics of the empire than the absolute numbers might suggest. Indeed, by the time of Constantine’s conversion Christians probably had achieved majorities in many of the cities’, Stark, *Cities of God*, 71.

<sup>14</sup> B. A. Pearson, ‘On Rodney Stark’s Foray into Early Christian History’, *Religion* 29 (1999): 171-76, citing 172.

urban expression of early Christianity seen in Acts. However, there was never a total divide between urban and rural, but a continual overlap between these two populations.<sup>15</sup>

#### 14.1.3.4 Travel and Transport

Travel and transport trends added to this urban focus. As missionaries travelled, they arrived in many of the large cities of the Empire, for these cities were the hubs for all transportation networks within the Roman world. The Roman roads were designed to connect larger population centres together. However, ships had the greatest impact:

It was not primarily roads that made people in this era so mobile. It was boats...Rome was mainly a waterfront empire surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. Almost a lake, the Mediterranean has very weak tides, is sheltered from storms, and lacks the offshore distances that make sailing far more dangerous on the great oceans. The sailing ships used in this era were quite reliable, capacious, and much faster than any form of land transportation.<sup>16</sup>

The strategic ports of the Empire quickly became larger cities, because of their commercial value and the constant influx of people travelling through them.<sup>17</sup>

The scope of travel in the Empire was massive.<sup>18</sup> As Meeks explains, 'The people of the Roman Empire traveled more extensively and easily than any...would again until the nineteenth century.'<sup>19</sup> This unprecedented level of travel and mobility, centred on the cities, contributed to the urban focus of the Christian mission in Acts.

#### 14.1.3.5 Urban Deviancy and Unconventionality

New religions also flocked to the cities because they found greater receptivity to their message there. Fischer's Theory of Urban Deviancy explains this trend: 'The more urban the place, the higher the rates of unconventionality'.<sup>20</sup> This shows that the larger the population,

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<sup>15</sup> Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 41-46, 132, 139, 287-293. E.g., the elite classes straddled both urban and rural populations through their country villas and town houses. S. E. Alcock, *Graecia Capta: The Landscapes of Roman Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 33-92, on the rural landscape.

<sup>16</sup> Stark, *Cities of God*, 74.

<sup>17</sup> 'Although wandering preachers may have been the first Christians to reach Rome, it seems likely that the primary bearers of the new faith were rank-and-file believers who traveled for commercial or personal reasons', Stark, *Cities of God*, 73.

<sup>18</sup> A grave inscription in Phrygia claims that a merchant made 72 trips to Rome, a one-way journey of more than a thousand miles. *Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas Pertinentes*, 4.841; Stark, *Cities of God*, 74.

<sup>19</sup> Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 17.

<sup>20</sup> C. S. Fischer, 'Toward a Subcultural Theory of Urbanism', *American Journal of Sociology* 80 (1975): 1319-41, citing 1328. By 'more urban' Fischer means having a larger population.

the easier it is to assemble the ‘critical mass’ needed to form a deviant subculture, that is, a group of people who sustain unconventional outlooks and activities.<sup>21</sup> Early Christianity was a ‘deviant’ subculture, at odds with the conventional norms governing religious expression in the Greco-Roman world. It follows that Christians would be able to assemble the critical mass needed to form a congregation sooner in larger cities than in smaller ones.<sup>22</sup> Paul assembles this critical mass relatively quickly in every city that he travels to – the large population sizes facilitate this process.

## ***14.2 Strategic Approaches***

### ***14.2.1 Receptive Social Networks***

Once Paul has selected a place to evangelize, he looks for people matching certain criteria. His goal is to find a way into an existing social network, and this involves forming relational attachments with people who have many other relational attachments.<sup>23</sup> Paul looks for the person or group with whom he can have the most rapport in the least amount of time, and who is most receptive to both his friendship and his message. This is preferably a person with whom he already has some sort of connection.

If he has no existing relational ‘entry points’, Paul goes to the most open and receptive people he can find, who are usually in the synagogue.<sup>24</sup> The synagogue is a natural starting point for Paul, because he shares significant common ground with it culturally and

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<sup>21</sup> If twelve people are needed to form and sustain a deviant subculture, other things being equal it will be easier to find and recruit a dozen like-minded people out of a population of 10,000 than out of a population of 100.

<sup>22</sup> Stark, *Cities of God*, 81. This idea of a ‘critical mass’ is a helpful way of thinking about Paul’s initial goal, when he approaches a city to establish a church there. This is the necessary ‘beachhead’ for a new religion.

<sup>23</sup> This has parallels with the ‘person of peace’ concept in the Gospels: Lk 10.6; Mt 10.11 (‘worthy person’).

<sup>24</sup> *Συναγωγή* occurs 12 times in the missionary journeys, in: Salamis (13.5); Pisidian Antioch (13.14,43); Iconium (14.1); Thessalonica (17.1); Berea (17.10); Athens (17.17); Corinth (18.4,7); Ephesus (18.19,26; 19.8). *Ἀρχισυνάγωγος* occurs 3 times, in: Pisidian Antioch (13.15); Corinth (18.8,17). If there is a synagogue in a city Paul is evangelizing, this is always where he begins. If not, he will still look for Jews and God-fearers, such as at the place of prayer in Philippi (16.13-15). There are only three cities Paul visits on his journeys where Acts does not mention the mission starting at the synagogue or Jewish place of prayer: Paphos (13.6-12), Lystra (14.8-18), and Derbe (14.21). This is either because there is not a synagogue or significant Jewish population in that city, or Luke’s account of missionary activity in the location is brief (Derbe).

theologically, and is often allowed to teach there as a visiting speaker.<sup>25</sup> The synagogue also provides a social network to penetrate.<sup>26</sup> The God-fearers are a particularly successful 'target-group' for Paul,<sup>27</sup> for they are drawn to Jewish monotheism, but are not prepared to embrace all of the cultural trappings and restrictions that come with becoming a full Jewish proselyte, and are therefore kept on the fringes of the synagogue communities. The God-fearers are one of the chief strategic doorways into many of the cities that Paul visits.

#### 14.2.2 People of Influence

Paul also looks for people of influence within these strategic settings. He practices householder evangelism, and targets leaders or influencers within an established social network.<sup>28</sup> In this way he gains influence and friendship with many by gaining it with a few. The evangelistic breakthrough often comes through a person of influence converting in a certain community, and others then follow their lead.<sup>29</sup> One of the hallmarks of the Pauline mission in Acts is the number of influential, middle to upper class conversions that happen.<sup>30</sup> These people quickly become the social base for an emerging church community, and their home often becomes the material base for the new congregation. By winning people of good reputation in an area, Paul can also gain good standing within that area.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> This is a common practice. Cf. 13.15-43 for the example of Paul's synagogue speech in Pisidian Antioch. Paul selects his destination cities partially on the basis of their Jewish Diaspora population.

<sup>26</sup> For more on the role of social networks in the early Christian mission, see Stark, *Cities of God*, 8-15.

<sup>27</sup> God-fearers are mentioned eight times in the missionary journeys, covering a wide geographical range of the Empire. Φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν: Pisidian Antioch (13.16,26); σεβόμενοι: Pisidian Antioch (13.43,50); Philippi (16.14); Thessalonica (17.4); Athens (17.17); Corinth (18.7). As Gentiles frequenting Jewish synagogues, God-fearers are generally the first group of Gentiles to hear and respond to the Christian message.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Sergius Paulus in Paphos (13.6-12); Lydia in Philippi (16.15); the Philippian jailer (16.31,34); Dionysius in Athens (17.34); Titius Justus in Corinth (18.7); Crispus in Corinth (18.8); the Troas homeowner (20.7-8).

<sup>29</sup> Such as at Corinth (18.8): when Crispus, the synagogue ruler, converts, many others quickly follow.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. the leading women (γυναικῶν πρώτων, 17.4); prominent women and men (εὐσηχημόνων, 17.12); Sergius Paulus (13.6-12); Lydia (16.13-15); Dionysius the Areopagite (17.34); Crispus the synagogue ruler (18.8); Apollos, 'a learned man' (18.24); Manaen, brought up with Herod the tetrarch (13.1); the Asiarchs (19.31). When Luke gives details of individuals who convert, they are nearly always people of influence.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Lydia in Philippi: by 'winning' her friendship and trust, Paul gains credibility in the community, and wins the friendship of many others (16.13-15,40).

### *14.2.3 Continual and Relevant Gospel Proclamation*

Paul proclaims the Gospel everywhere he goes. Even if he is only in a place for a brief stay, or a travel stopover, he is constantly sharing the word with people he encounters.<sup>32</sup> This is reminiscent of the way that Paul compares himself to a gardener who sows the seed as broadly as he can (1 Cor 3.7-8).<sup>33</sup> But he never preaches a stock message – he preaches with precise relevance, tailoring his message to his hearers.<sup>34</sup> He looks for common ground, natural starting points for the message, and he varies his content to build upon the interests and authorities of his audience.

### *14.2.4 Supernatural Confirmations of the Message*

Finally, Paul does not simply rely on words and convincing arguments about the gospel, but consistently demonstrates the truth of his message through supernatural miracles,<sup>35</sup> spiritual power encounters,<sup>36</sup> and signs and wonders.<sup>37</sup> These confirm the veracity of what Paul is preaching, and show the superiority of Paul's God above any rival religious system. This is an effective way of gathering an initial core of followers, who are convinced because they see the power of the God Paul is speaking to them about, and believe based on that experience of God, rather than because of an intellectual persuasion.<sup>38</sup> God does many powerful miracles through Paul (19.11), which greatly contribute to the expansion of the church.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> This can be seen throughout his missionary journeys, but esp., 14.25; 17.17; 18.19-20.

<sup>33</sup> See also the parable of the seed and the sower (Lk 8.4-15). This parable may have influenced Paul, and he certainly epitomises the sower in Acts, casting his seed everywhere, as broadly as he possibly can.

<sup>34</sup> Compare Paul's speeches to the synagogue (13.16-41), to the Gentiles at Lystra (14.15-17) and Athens (17.22-31), and to the Ephesian elders (20.18-35). He works hard to be relevant to his audience.

<sup>35</sup> E.g., the healing of the lame man in Lystra (14.8-10); release from prison in Philippi (16.25-26); extraordinary miracles (*δυνάμεις*) in Ephesus, including his handkerchiefs miraculously healing people (19.11-12). Luke's listing of miracles in Acts is clearly not comprehensive, but is meant to be a representative selection.

<sup>36</sup> E.g., the confrontations with Elymas the sorcerer in Paphos (13.6-12); with the 'pythoness' slave girl in Philippi (16.16-18); with the seven sons of Sceva in Ephesus (19.13-16).

<sup>37</sup> *Σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα*: 14.3; 15.12.

<sup>38</sup> The connection between supernatural power and belief leading to conversion is explicit in 13.12; 14.1-4; 16.29; and 19.17-20. It is implied elsewhere.

<sup>39</sup> One could argue that signs and wonders are the single greatest contributor to Paul's missional success.



### 14.3 Strategic Foundations

#### 14.3.1 The Cell – Embryonic Church

Once Paul has identified an evangelistic target, and begins to build relationships there, his goal is to plant a small nucleus of a church, sometimes called a ‘cell’.<sup>40</sup> He always establishes communities of new Christians, and never leaves individual converts alone.<sup>41</sup> He preaches until he has a small group of new converts gathered, and then he often takes these to the side to train and develop into an embryonic church.<sup>42</sup> This involves vision for further mission, which they take ownership for, and intentional modelling and training in what the Christian life and community entail.<sup>43</sup> This early cell community happens in the home, and is based around an *oikos* household structure.<sup>44</sup>

#### 14.3.2 City-Wide Church Outreach

Paul’s time in a city generally results in one or a few small cells of Christian households, which he visits again shortly thereafter, to build up and strengthen them.<sup>45</sup> These cells become nascent bases of missionary operation in their respective cities. Each one reaches outwards evangelistically, first impacting its city, and then developing mission into the surrounding regions.<sup>46</sup> Paul generally does not stay long enough for the burgeoning cells to become larger church networks, but only until he feels that they are self-reliant, or until he is

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<sup>40</sup> Gehring, *House*, 179-80.

<sup>41</sup> Paul establishes these cells, or embryonic church communities, in at least 10 cities: Pisidian Antioch (13.43-48; 14.21-22); Iconium (14.1-4,21-22); Lystra (14.20-22); Derbe (14.21-22); Philippi (16.40); Thessalonica (17.4,10); Berea (17.12,14); Athens (17.34); Corinth (18.8,18); Ephesus (19.9-10). Luke only mentions Sergius Paulus in Paphos, but this does not mean that communities of faith were not begun there.

<sup>42</sup> This is explicit in Corinth (18.7-8,18) and Ephesus (19.8-10).

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Priscilla and Aquila (18.26). If converts come from the synagogue setting, Paul has a natural foundation to build from, and much useful common ground, both in theology and practice.

<sup>44</sup> E.g., the home of Titius Justus in Corinth (18.7-8). The only clear exception to this is the lecture hall of Tyrannus in Ephesus, which provides the ideal public setting for training and evangelistic proclamation, but homes are still a vital part of Paul’s training and missional strategy there (cf. 20.20).

<sup>45</sup> Rom 15.19b refers to this cell-planting concept in the key cities. Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 9-10.

<sup>46</sup> For regional missional strategies, cf. Acts 13.49: ‘the word of the Lord spread throughout the entire region (*ὅλης τῆς χώρας*)’; 14.6-7: ‘and to the surrounding regions (*περὶχωρον*), where they continued to preach the good news’; and 19.10: ‘all the Jews and Greeks in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord’.

forced out by persecution.<sup>47</sup> Paul intentionally trains these new churches to be responsible for their own community life, and for their outreach in the city and surrounding areas.

### *14.3.3 Regional Church Networks*

This results in a network of young congregations, which are equal with one another, and which each becomes bases for regional mission (18.27-28). They form their own outreach teams, working to assist Paul in his outreach in their areas, and then continuing on with the mission once Paul has left. Each of these is an independent missional congregation.

The individual new communities are not isolated from one another, but are linked together across social networks of travel and communication on multiple levels. M. B. Thompson compares this early Christian network to the modern internet.<sup>48</sup> He discusses the grid of Roman roads and shipping lanes of the first century world, which made travel far safer and easier than it ever had been before. It was relatively easy and inexpensive for early Christian missionaries, letter and message carriers, and travelers to board shipping vessels.<sup>49</sup> The network 'servers' were the churches themselves, and the churches at Jerusalem, Rome, Syrian Antioch, Philippi, Corinth, and Ephesus were particularly significant hubs. Secondary hubs were many of the smaller cities where Paul established churches (such as Iconium or Berea), which were centers in their own right because the roads of a local district converged there.<sup>50</sup> Hospitality practices proved essential in this growing matrix, and 'ensured social cohesion and solidarity for each smaller network within the larger Christian web.'<sup>51</sup> Because the existence of many of these young churches was threatened, they grew to rely on each other, in an ever-increasing network of communication, travel, attachment, and support.

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<sup>47</sup> See 1 Thes 2.1-2 (Philippi); 1 Thes 1.6; 2.13-20; 3.1-13 (Thessalonica).

<sup>48</sup> M. B. Thompson, 'The Holy Internet: Communication Between Churches in the First Christian Generation', *The Gospels for All Christians*, R. Bauckham, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998): 49-70.

<sup>49</sup> Thompson, 'Holy Internet', 52-53.

<sup>50</sup> Thompson, 'Holy Internet', 53-54.

<sup>51</sup> Thompson, 'Holy Internet', 56.

## ***14.4 Strategic Development***

After Paul has been with the new church for a relatively short period of time, he leaves them to carry on the mission.<sup>52</sup> He is wary of allowing them to become too dependent on his leadership, and wants them to be autonomous and self-sufficient in their own right.

### ***14.4.1 Strengthening the Churches***

However, he works hard to stay connected with these young churches, and to support them whenever he can. It is Paul's priority to visit the new congregations as frequently as possible, to check on their progress, and to continue to strengthen, encourage, and train them.<sup>53</sup> Paul's goal is to establish reproducing churches, and this requires follow-up and personal training, as each community learns what it means to be the body of Christ in its particular locale.<sup>54</sup>

### ***14.4.2 Local Leadership***

Paul also establishes a local structure of leadership and oversight for the new churches by installing elders in every church that he establishes.<sup>55</sup> He often does this after a short period of testing, to see who remains faithful, and is capable of such a role (cf. 14.21-23). These new elders are often already natural leaders within the community, such as householders and business leaders. After being appointed through prayer and fasting (14.23; cf. 13.2-3), the eldership works to guide the local congregation's vision, direction, and strategy for

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<sup>52</sup> Paul stays different durations of time in different places, from a few days (e.g., 14.20-21), to nearly three years (19.8-10,22; 20.31), but he always moves on to other places, leaving the newly formed churches to take ownership and responsibility for their own survival and growth.

<sup>53</sup> We see Paul doing this throughout Acts: 14.21-22; 15.41; 16.1-5; 18.23; 19.21; 20.1-3.

<sup>54</sup> Paul also continues to instruct and develop his churches through letters that are written and sent back and forth, though Acts never mentions this. Luke may not be aware of the extent of Paul's writing, or he may simply choose to remain silent in this area. Paul writes Galatians to the churches planted on his first missionary journey, Corinthians to the church in Corinth, Ephesians to Ephesus, Philippians to Philippi, Thessalonians to Thessalonica, etc. Cf. also Colossians and Philemon, written to the church at Colossae, which Epaphras, one of Paul's trainees and co-workers, had established (Col 1.7-8; Acts 19.10). There are scholarly debates about which letters are genuinely Pauline. It is likely that Paul wrote other letters to other churches, such as at Berea or Athens (or Troas?), or others to these same churches, that have not been preserved. Cf. the 'previous letter' (1 Cor 5.9-10), and the 'severe letter' (2 Cor 7.8-12) from Paul to the Corinthians, both of which are now lost.

<sup>55</sup> Although Luke does not explicitly state this in every city Paul visits, it can be assumed that this was his practice based on 14.23 ('Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in every church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord'), and on 20.17-38, Paul's emotional farewell to the elders of the Ephesian church. Luke 'brackets' his narrative account of Paul's missionary journeys with these two references to local church eldership, strongly implying that this was Paul's consistent practice elsewhere.

community life, and citywide and regional mission. They also take responsibility for pastoral care, teaching and preaching, and other leadership duties. Training and equipping these elders is a priority for Paul.<sup>56</sup> Paul's focus on empowering local leadership in Acts shows that he knows how vital healthy leaders are to the development of a healthy church. These local elders are the key to the emergence of church-planting movements in a particular area.

#### *14.4.3 Co-Workers and Ministry Partners*

Paul cannot accomplish such a massive missionary enterprise on his own, so he develops a staff of ministry partners who assist him in the mission.<sup>57</sup> These co-workers are another innovative element of Paul's missionary strategy. Timothy,<sup>58</sup> Silas/Silvanus,<sup>59</sup> and Titus<sup>60</sup> are three examples of this primary team, although there are likely others, such as Tychicus,<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Luke underscores this priority by making the narrative finale of Paul's missionary journeys his training and equipping of the Ephesian elders (20.17-38). We can assume this was a practice repeated elsewhere, as Luke often picks one example of a commonly repeated practice to describe in detail (cf. the speeches). The other references to 'strengthening' and 'encouraging' the churches would have followed along similar lines.

<sup>57</sup> *Gehring, House*, 180.

<sup>58</sup> Timothy is mentioned six times in Acts: 16.1; 17.14,15; 18.5; 19.22; 20.4. He is a native of Lystra, with a Greek father, and a Jewish Christian mother (Acts 16.1; 2 Tim 1.5; 3.15). He is likely led to faith by Paul on his first missionary journey through Lystra (Acts 14.6-20; cf. 1 Tim 1.2), and joins Paul on his second journey through Lystra (Acts 16.1-5). He helps Paul evangelize Macedonia and Achaia (Acts 17.14-15; 18.5), and is with him throughout much of his longer ministry at Ephesus (Acts 19.22). He travels with him from Ephesus to Macedonia, to Corinth, back to Macedonia, and to Asia Minor (Acts 20.1-6). He may accompany Paul all the way back to Jerusalem (Acts 21.16-20), and is with Paul during his first imprisonment (Phil 1.1; Col 1.1; Phlm 1). Timothy eventually leads the Ephesian church, and Paul's admires him enough to name him as the co-sender of six of his letters (2 Cor., Phil., Col., 1 & 2 Thess., and Philem.), and speaks highly of him to the Philippians (Phil 2.19-22). Paul requests Timothy to join him at the end of his life at Rome (2 Tim 4.9,11,21). It seems that Timothy is imprisoned (at Rome?) and subsequently released (Heb 13.23).

<sup>59</sup> Silas is mentioned 13 times in Acts: 15.22,27,32,34,40; 16.19,25,29; 17.4,10,14,15; 18.5. He is a leader in the Jerusalem church (15.22), a prophet (15.32), and a Roman citizen (16.37-38), who is appointed along with Judas to carry the apostolic decree (15.22,27), and encourages and strengthens the brothers (15.32). Paul chooses Silas to travel with him on his second journey (15.40), and he travels with Paul through Tarsus, Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Pisidian Antioch, Troas, Philippi, Thessalonica (17.4), and Berea (17.10,14), before joining him again in Corinth (18.5). Silas (Σιλας) is a contraction for Silvanus (Σιλουανός). Silas is mentioned 4 other times in the NT: 2 Cor 1.19; 1 Thes 1.1; 2 Thes 1.1; 1 Pet 5.12. He may be the bearer of 1 Peter, and probably helps Peter write that book, as his secretary (1 Pet 5.12). Cf. Acts 15.22-29.

<sup>60</sup> Acts is strangely silent about Titus. He is mentioned 12 times in the NT: 2 Cor 2.13; 7.6,13,14; 8.6,16,23; 12.18; Gal 2.1,3; 2 Tim 4.10; Tit 1.4. Titus is a Gentile Christian who works with Paul at Ephesus during his third journey, and is likely the bearer of Paul's severe letter to the Corinthian church. Paul arranges to meet Titus at Troas (2 Cor 2.12-13), but when he does not appear, Paul travels on to Macedonia, meets Titus, and is relieved to hear a positive report from him (2 Cor 7.6-7,13-14). Titus is also the bearer of 2 Corinthians (2 Cor 8.23), and is given responsibility for making final arrangements for the collection, begun a year earlier, in Corinth (2 Cor 8.6,16-17). Titus leads a church related to Paul on Crete (Tit 1.5), which Paul leaves him in charge of (Tit 2.15; 3.12-13). Paul asks Titus to meet him in Nicopolis when a suitable replacement arrives in Crete (Tit 3.12). Later, Titus apparently goes on a mission to Dalmatia (2 Tim 4.10). Considering these assignments, Titus is a capable and dependable leader, in whom Paul must have invested quite a lot.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Acts 20.4; Eph 6.21; Col 4.7; 2 Tim 4.12; Tit 3.12. Paul relied on Tychicus as a co-worker and friend.

and possibly Luke.<sup>62</sup> They are given responsibility for looking after churches, helping with outreach and mission, and other duties, such as organizing collections, and delivering letters and personal correspondence.<sup>63</sup>

A secondary group of co-workers assists Paul on a more temporary basis, and are sent out from individual congregations which he has established, particularly to assist in local and regional mission.<sup>64</sup> Among these are Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius (Acts 20.4), Stephanas, Fortunatus, Achaicus (1 Cor 16.17), Epaphroditus (Phil 2.25; 4.18 – ‘my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier’), along with many of the other missional partners that Paul mentions in his letters. These congregants are released from their local responsibilities within individual congregations, and help with Paul’s larger regional outreach.

These tiers of leaders and Pauline co-workers greatly expand the leadership base of the emerging movement of churches, and carry on the mission after Paul is arrested and imprisoned. They are a source of support, encouragement, and protection to Paul, and he strategically equips them to carry on the mission long after he departs. Paul’s missional enterprise would not have reached the extent of influence it did were it not for these networks of ministry partners, which Paul so intentionally builds up during his various journeys.

#### *14.4.4 Regional Movements*

Paul continues to practice partner mission, and is nearly always a part of a larger team. The mission bases emulate him in this regard, assembling small missional teams to send into un-evangelized areas to proclaim the word, start cells, and reproduce the process all over again.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> One could argue that Luke should be included in Paul’s primary team of co-laborers. Cf. the three ‘we passages’, 16.10-17; 20.5-21.18; 27.1-28.16. Cf. also Col 4.14; Phlm 1.24 (Paul’s ‘fellow worker’); and 2 Tim 4.11, where ‘only Luke’ has stayed with Paul in his final imprisonment. He is a significant personal friend and co-worker of Paul’s, who possibly spends longer with him than any other person. Some scholars speculate that Luke also writes the Pastoral Epistles (1 & 2 Tim., Tit.), on Paul’s behalf. His influence within the early church, simply from writing his Gospel and Acts (the 2 longest books in the NT canon), is immense.

<sup>63</sup> Few of these details emerge in Acts, but they are prominent in Paul’s letters.

<sup>64</sup> Gehring, *House*, 180. Cf. 1 Cor 16.15-18; Phil 2.25-30; 2 Cor 18.18-19.

<sup>65</sup> This reproducing/multiplying model is crucial to Paul’s missional success. He begins churches that are easily reproduced and multiplied into surrounding areas and population centres.

Individual house churches within these cities are the starting point for the entire local and regional missionary enterprise, the seeds of the future movement.<sup>66</sup> This is what makes householders such a priority for Paul. ‘In the Pauline mission, houses served not only as meeting places for the worship services but also as mission support bases that provided the manpower [and financial resources] for mission outreach to the city and beyond.’<sup>67</sup>

It does not end with these house churches; the goal is a city-wide network of congregations, which are able to then send missionary teams into surrounding areas. The ultimate example of this in Acts is the church at Antioch. Acts 13.1-3 is a paradigmatic episode in the Acts narrative on many levels, such as the role prayer, worship, fasting, and prophetic words play in the ongoing advancement of the mission.<sup>68</sup> But its depiction of the local church sending Barnabas and Paul into their mission is perhaps most significant. After hearing the Holy Spirit’s instructions (13.2), and fasting and praying a second time, ‘they placed their hands on them and sent them off’ (ἐπιθέντες τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῖς ἀπέλυσαν, 13.3). This should be understood as a formal commissioning of these new missionaries, who emerge directly out of the vibrancy and strength of this local church at Antioch.

This commissioning relationship is underscored by the way this mission team returns to the Antioch church, ‘from which they had been *commissioned*’ (ὅθεν ἦσαν παραδεδομένοι, 14.26), and ‘reports’ back to them (ἀνήγγελλον, 14.27). Finally, Paul and Silas leave again on the second missionary journey, ‘*commended* by the brothers to the grace of the Lord’ (παραδοθεὶς τῇ χάριτι τοῦ κυρίου ὑπὸ τῶν ἀδελφῶν, 15.40). Luke is painting a picture of a thriving local church, which intentionally sends out mission teams to start other churches, and

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<sup>66</sup> In 1 Cor 3.6, Paul describes his work as that of a gardener who only plants seeds, while others do the watering. This is his way of summarizing it – the seed is the initial house church gathering, and once that is planted, he is often on his way elsewhere, content to let others nurture and water the developing plant.

<sup>67</sup> Gehring, *House*, 182.

<sup>68</sup> For more analysis of the pivotal and paradigmatic missional Antioch church, see §10.3.4, §11.5.4, §12.6.3.

there is no reason to believe that this is not repeated at many of the other churches which Paul begins.<sup>69</sup>

As established city-wide house church networks begin sending out mission teams, this grows into regional evangelistic movements, each reproducing these same basic elements into new and unreached areas. There are indications of this at Pisidian Antioch ('the word was carried throughout that entire *region*', *χώρας*, 13.49), as well as at other stages of the Pauline mission such as the 'surrounding areas' (*περίχωρον*) of Lystra and Derbe (14.6). However, this comes to full development in the way that the Ephesian church has such a significant regional impact that 'all who lived in the province of Asia heard' (*πάντας τοὺς κατοικοῦντας τὴν Ἀσίαν ἀκοῦσαι*, 19.10), and 'the word spread widely [geographically] and grew in power' (*ὁ λόγος ἠϋξάνεν καὶ ἴσχυεν*, 19.20).<sup>70</sup> These passages highlight a clear regional strategy, involving the sending of church-planting teams into surrounding areas from a missional hub.

## **14.5 Personal Strategies**

### **14.5.1 Team**

Paul also develops personal strategies which enable him to persevere in his mission and avoid premature burnout.<sup>71</sup> A primary personal strategy is the concept of team. Paul rarely travels alone, but is always building teams of workers and companions around him, in an intentional practice of partner mission.<sup>72</sup> These people surely help to prevent the loneliness and discouragement that could set in on long and challenging trips. They also provide physical protection and security from bandits, pirates, and other dangers. This has a positive effect on

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<sup>69</sup> Apollos' journey to Achaia hints at this sort of missionary strategy (18.27-28). Cf. §13.2.5.1, and the examples of Epaphras, Col 1.5-7; 4.12-13; Phlm 1.23, and the seven churches of Revelation, Rev 2-3. While these are not in Acts, they are concrete NT examples of a mission strategy which Acts clearly points towards.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. 12.24: 'the word of God grew (*ἠϋξάνεν*) and was multiplied', also about the church's regional growth.

<sup>71</sup> These strategies are missional in that they allow the mission to be sustained for the long haul.

<sup>72</sup> There are only two or three times when Paul may have actually been alone – 17.14-34; 18.21,23.

Paul, and helps him to persevere through many difficulties.<sup>73</sup> These companions are also trained and developed into key leaders for the emerging church. Throughout Acts, Luke emphasizes the importance of team ministry and partner mission.

#### *14.5.2 Connection to 'Home Base'*

Paul also stays connected to his home-base in Syrian Antioch, and returns to report to them on his progress whenever possible.<sup>74</sup> This involves times of celebrating together what God has done, and also re-connecting relationally with the deeper friendships that he has there. This sort of long-term history in relationship is an emotional anchor for Paul, particularly when he is continually forming new relationships on the mission field.

#### *14.5.3 Periods of Rest*

At the end of his first two missionary journeys, Paul takes a significant period of time to rest and become rejuvenated for the next step in his mission.<sup>75</sup> He intentionally pursues a balanced cycle of exertion and restoration, which enables him to persevere in his mission for the long haul, without growing overly fatigued or exhausted by the work and travel.<sup>76</sup>

#### *14.6 Summary of Strategies in Acts*

All of the missional strategies articulated in this part are summarized comprehensively in the following table.

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<sup>73</sup> Paul's letters show how greatly he relies upon this ministry team, and how devastated he is if they desert him: 2 Tim 4.10,16; Rom 16.21; 1 Cor 4.17; 2 Cor 1.9; 1 Thes 3.2; 1 Tim 1.2; 2 Tim 1.2.

<sup>74</sup> Acts 14.26-28: 'They sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed [note Luke's emphasis on closure]. On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported (ἀνήγγελλον)...and they stayed there a long time with the disciples.' Cf. also 18.22-23.

<sup>75</sup> 14.28: 'stayed not a short time' (χρόνον οὐκ ὀλίγον); 18.23: 'spending some time in Antioch' (χρόνον τινά).

<sup>76</sup> Paul surely rests during his journeys as well, e.g., while waiting for ships; cf. 16.12; 18.11; 19.8,10,22; 20.31.



## **Table 14.1 A Lukan/Pauline Missionary Strategy Manual (Acts 13-21)**<sup>77</sup>

- 1. Strategic Initial Planning**
  - a. Direction*
    - i. Follow the Holy Spirit's guidance (13.4; 16.6-10; 19.21; 20.22-23; 21.12-14)
    - ii. Follow pre-existing relational connections (13.4-12)
    - iii. Expect persecution, and persevere through it, adjusting itinerary accordingly (13.50-51; 14.5-6,19-20; 16.40; 17.7-10,13-14; 20.1)
  - b. Travel*
    - i. Follow the best transport and trade routes (13.13-14.23; 16.1-12; 18.23; 20.6)
    - ii. Seek maximum impact by targeting influential urban centres, and capital cities (13.5,6,14,51; 14.1,6; 16.8,12; 17.1,10,15; 18.1,19; 19.1)
- 2. Strategic Approaches – Beginning to Impact a City**
  - a. Target receptive social networks, where there is natural rapport and connections*
    - i. Local synagogues (13.5,13.14,15,42,45; 14.1; 17.1,10,17; 18.4,8,7,17,19,26; 19.8)
    - ii. God-fearers (13.16,26,43,50; 16.14; 17.4,17;18.7)
    - iii. Jewish places of prayer (16.13-15)
    - iv. Workplace networks (18.1-3)
    - v. Spiritually/philosophically 'interested' people (17.17-21; 19.9)
  - b. Focus on people of influence and prominence, who can provide credibility, material support, and other relational connections*
    - i. Householders (13.6-12; 16.15,31-34,40; 17.34; 18.7,8; 20.7-8)
    - ii. Synagogue Leaders (18.8,17)
    - iii. People of social status and wealth (13.6-12; 16.13-15,40; 17.4,12,34; 18.8,24; 19.31)
  - c. Proclaim the Gospel*
    - i. Continually (14.25; 17.17; 18.19-20; nearly everywhere Paul goes)
    - ii. Relevantly (13.16-41; 14.15-17; 17.22-31; 20.18-35)
  - d. Rely on supernatural demonstrations and confirmations of the message*
    - i. Miracles (14.8-10; 16.25-26; 19.11-12)
    - ii. Spiritual power encounters (13.6-12; 16.16-18; 19.13-16)
    - iii. Signs and wonders (14.3; 15.12)
- 3. Strategic Foundations – Establishing Healthy Churches**
  - a. The cell – an embryonic church (the beach-head)*
    - i. Gather initial believers into a house church, never leave individual converts isolated (13.43-48; 14. 1-4,21-22; 16.40; 17.4,10; 17.12,14; 18.8,18; 19.9-10)
    - ii. Train and equip this group for community and mission, focusing on empowering the rank and file (above, 18.7-8,26; 19.9)
  - b. City-wide church networks*
    - i. Multiply the house churches as they grow (19.9-10)
    - ii. Allow the house churches to grow across a city (19.10-20)
  - c. Regional church networks*
    - i. Relationally link the new churches with others (18.27-28)
    - ii. Encourage churches to develop regional missional strategies (13.49; 14.6-7; 19.10)
- 4. Strategic Development – Establishing Sustainable Reproducing Movements**
  - a. Empower the new church to take ownership for its mission*
    - i. Leave fairly quickly (13.13,51; 14.6,20,21; 16.40; 17.10,14; 18.1)
    - ii. Only stay longer if the Spirit clearly leads to do so (18.9-11,18; 19.10)
  - b. Strengthen and support the new churches*
    - i. Visit as often as possible, for further training and encouragement (14.21-22; 15.41; 16.1-5; 18.23; 19.21; 20.1-3)

<sup>77</sup> This should be understood as Luke's personal missional teaching to a potential missionary or church leader, as well as Paul's *modus operandi* on his missionary journeys in Acts.

- ii. Write letters to address particular problems and issues (Pauline epistles)
- iii. Send or leave ministry partners to support churches (17.14; 18.27-28; 19.22; 20.4-5)
- c. *Appoint local church leadership*
  - i. Wait to see who is faithful and capable (14.21-23)
  - ii. Install elders in every church, with prayer, fasting, and the laying on of hands (14.23)
  - iii. Focus on empowering and equipping these local elders (20.17-38)
- d. *Develop a network of co-workers and ministry partners to help with the mission*
  - i. A primary, more permanent team (13.3; 15.36-40; 16.1,19,25,29; 17. 4,10,14,15; 18.5; 19.22)
  - ii. A secondary, more temporary team (18.1-4; 19.29; 20.4)
- e. *Cultivate a movement mentality*
  - i. Create vision for regional mission (13.49; 14.6)
  - ii. Challenge churches to send out missionaries into other areas (19.10,20)
  - iii. Commission new church-planters (Col 1.5-7; 4.12-13; Phlm 1.23)

## 5. Personal Strategies

- a. *Minister in teams – recruit travelling companions, never travel alone*
  - i. Personal encouragement, companionship, protection (Paul is only alone in 17.14-34; 18.21,23)
  - ii. Intensive training and mentoring (20.4)
- b. *Maintain connection to 'home base'*
  - i. Accountability (14.26-27; 18.22)
  - ii. Deep, long-term relationships (14.28; 18.23)
  - iii. Emotional/psychological stability (14.28; 18.23)
- c. *Set aside periods of rest and rejuvenation, to avoid premature burnout*
  - i. Briefly during journeys (hints – 16.12; 18.11; 19.8,10,22; 20.31)
  - ii. For extended periods at the end of journeys (14.28; 18.23)

## **PART 4 CONCLUSION – THE PAULINE MISSION AS A MISSIONARY TRAINING MANUAL**

Paul's missionary journeys in Acts contain patterns and themes which point to intentional missional strategies which Paul employs in his missionary work, as Luke reports it. These strategies undergird the exponentially rapid expansion of the early church throughout the Roman Empire. Luke weaves these missional strategies into his account of the Pauline mission to motivate and equip his readers to do these very things. He has inspired and stimulated them to mission, by answering the *why* behind it (part 2). He has shown them the structures necessary, by describing the *what* (part 3). Now he means to equip and instruct them in doing it, by explaining the *how* (part 4).

In this regard, the Pauline mission in Acts functions as a missionary training manual for a new generation of missionaries. Nearly every step which Paul takes is strategic in some way, and is meant to be a road-map for Luke's readers, as they seek to emulate their missionary role-model. This is most explicit during Paul's farewell address to the Ephesian elders (20.17-38). Luke is urging his readers to imitate Paul, and calling his church to action, by provoking them to join the advancing mission in their day.

Acts is not a 'how-to-guide' with ten easy steps for successful Christian mission and growth, and it does not claim to have all the 'answers' about being church and doing mission. It is not a technical manual, but a witness and a narrative.<sup>78</sup> Yet its story contains much valuable missional instruction. Luke paints a vivid picture of the mission of the early church, in detailed and poignant narrative strokes. Perhaps Luke believed this would actually be more effective in achieving his overarching goals, and mobilizing his church for mission, for 'a picture is worth a thousand words'.

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<sup>78</sup> A. B. Robinson, R. W. Wall, *Called to Be Church: The Book of Acts for A New Day* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006): 13.

## PART 5 – MISSIONAL SUFFERING IN ACTS

*'And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.'*

-Acts 28.30-31 (NASB)

Having analyzed missional themes in Acts and established that Acts is fundamentally a missionary document, this part is a missional examination of the final episodes and the ending of Acts, and a summary and investigation of the purpose of Acts.

### CHAPTER 15 – PAUL THE MISSIONARY PRISONER (ACTS 22-28)

If the primary theme of Acts is mission, then this theme should pervade the entire narrative, including the final episodes. Luke has established his missional theme repeatedly throughout the previous chapters, and though it is not immediately apparent in the captivity, trial, and shipwreck narratives of Acts 22-28, a closer examination yields some helpful observations.

#### *15.1 Missional Suffering throughout Acts*

Luke devotes significant space to Paul the prisoner. Nearly 25% of Acts concerns Paul's final arrest and imprisonment.<sup>1</sup> Maddox claims that the last section on Paul's arrest and incarceration 'is slightly longer than that describing his mission',<sup>2</sup> and concludes that 'when we read Acts as a whole, rather than selectively, it is Paul the prisoner even more than Paul the missionary who we are meant to remember.'<sup>3</sup> This calls into question the overall thesis of this work, for as Maddox explains, 'if in Luke's eyes the main thing about Paul was his mission, then the final section of Acts is disappointing, for in the last nine chapters no one is

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<sup>1</sup> This is 12% of the overall text of Luke-Acts. When the 24 verses about Paul's earlier arrest and imprisonment in Philippi are included (16.16-40), this brings the percentage of Acts devoted to Pauline imprisonment close to 30%. B. Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, AIFCS 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994): 2; Maddox, *Purpose*, 66.

<sup>2</sup> Maddox, *Purpose*, 66.

<sup>3</sup> Maddox, *Purpose*, 67.

converted.’<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Krodel claims that, ‘for Luke, Paul the imprisoned, suffering witness and defender of the faith is even more important than Paul the missionary.’<sup>5</sup>

### *15.1.1 Suffering and Mission in Luke-Acts*

These claims can be disputed in at least two ways. First, the overall numbers that Maddox refers to are questionable. The total number of verses devoted to recounting Paul’s missionary journeys is 279,<sup>6</sup> while Luke uses 240 verses to describe Paul’s imprisonment.<sup>7</sup> If such numbers matter, the balance is slightly but significantly in favour of Paul’s mission.

#### *15.1.1.1 Rejecting a False Dichotomy*

However, this entire argument is missing the point; as Rapske explains, scholars making this kind of argument, ‘clearly miss the Lukan emphasis, for the dichotomy, “either missionary, or prisoner” is a patently false one.’<sup>8</sup> Witherington articulates this fallacy: ‘Prior to Acts 20 we have chronicles about evangelism and missionary work...by contrast, from Acts 20 on we have not missionary chronicles but apologetics in various forms.’<sup>9</sup> By imposing this false dichotomy on the text of Acts, scholars fail to comprehend what Luke has already made clear: a vital part of Paul’s mission is his imprisonment and suffering. Rather than being distinct aspects of Paul’s life and calling (*either missionary or prisoner*), the two are inseparable (*both missionary and prisoner*). Paul’s incarceration, trials, and sufferings should be understood and interpreted as another dimension of the missional agenda which Luke pursues throughout Acts. Witness and prisoner are complementary, rather than antithetical.

#### *15.1.1.2 Prophecies of Persecution and Mission in Luke’s Gospel*

Luke has already established this principle in Jesus’ prophetic predictions (Lk 21.12-19):

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<sup>4</sup> Maddox, *Purpose*, 76. This is questionable, cf. Acts 28.24.

<sup>5</sup> Krodel, *Acts*, 397. Other scholars have made similar claims.

<sup>6</sup> This is only verses explicitly recounting the Pauline mission journeys: 13.4-52; 14.1-28; 15.36-40; 16.1-40; 17.1-34; 18.1-28; 19.1-41; 20.1-38; 21.1-16.

<sup>7</sup> Acts 21.27-40; 22.1-30; 23.1-35; 24.1-27; 25.1-27; 26.1-32; 27.1-44; 28.1-31. It seems clear that Luke presents Paul’s Philippian imprisonment (16.16-40) as a part of his mission. However, even if these 25 verses are included, this still only brings the total to 265 verses, less than the total of Paul’s missionary journeys (279).

<sup>8</sup> Rapske, *Roman Custody*, 435-36.

<sup>9</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 661.

Before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for my name's sake. *It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony.* So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute. But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, and you will be hated by all because of my name. Yet not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives.

This passage can be understood as Luke's attempt to prepare his readers for Paul's suffering and imprisonment, and also for their own persecution as well.<sup>10</sup> It is significant that the words 'and prisons' (καὶ φυλακάς, 21.12) are not found in the corresponding accounts in Mk 13.8-13 or Mt 10.17-22a.<sup>11</sup> It is also crucial that Jesus says that this sort of suffering 'will lead to an opportunity for your testimony' (μαρτύριον, 21.13). Luke is clearly claiming that persecution such as this should be seen as a unique opportunity for missional witnessing.

These verses predict the persecution that is coming (ἐπιβαλοῦσιν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῶν καὶ διώξουσιν, 21.12), the trials that will follow (παραδιδόντες εἰς τὰς συναγωγὰς καὶ φυλακάς, ἀπαγομένους ἐπὶ βασιλεῖς καὶ ἡγεμόνας, 21.12,14), the unique empowerment for testimony that will accompany those trials (ἐγὼ γὰρ δώσω ὑμῖν στόμα καὶ σοφίαν, ἣ οὐ δυνήσονται ἀντιστῆναι ἢ ἀντειπεῖν ἅπαντες οἱ ἀντικείμενοι ὑμῖν, 21.15), the betrayals and martyrdom that will befall some (παραδοθήσεσθε δὲ καὶ ὑπὸ γονέων καὶ ἀδελφῶν καὶ συγγενῶν καὶ φίλων, καὶ θανατώσουσιν ἐξ ὑμῶν, 21.16,17), and God's ultimate protection of his people (καὶ θριξ ἐκ τῆς κεφαλῆς ὑμῶν οὐ μὴ ἀπόληται· ἐν τῇ ὑπομονῇ ὑμῶν κτήσασθε τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν, 21.18,19). Later in Acts, Luke presents Paul as the pre-eminent fulfillment of Christ's prophetic words.

### 15.1.1.3 Paul's Missional Suffering Before His Jerusalem Imprisonment

This theme is hinted at in Luke, but explicit in Acts. Acts 9.15,16 is the first clear example, when Christ speaks to Ananias about Paul: 'he is a chosen instrument of mine, to bear my

<sup>10</sup> See Rapske, *Roman Custody*, 398-401 for a detailed discussion of each of these phrases.

<sup>11</sup> Rapske, *Roman Custody*, 399. These words probably point to Paul specifically, and 'to the frequent reference to imprisonment in Acts', C. F. Evans, *Saint Luke*, TPI NT commentaries (London: SCM, 1990): 741.

name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for *I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake* (ἐγὼ γὰρ ὑποδείξω αὐτῷ ὅσα δεῖ αὐτὸν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος μου παθεῖν).’ Paul will be a witness in various sufferings, and ‘the reader is assured that the apostle’s sufferings are within the divine spotlight’s beam; these *are* his mission.’<sup>12</sup> Even at Paul’s conversion, his calling to missional suffering is clearly predicted in Acts, and Christ underscores the necessity of it by emphasizing that ‘it is necessary (δεῖ) for him to suffer’. Such distress will be an unavoidable aspect of Paul’s divine vocation. This passage deliberately echoes Christ’s prediction in Lk 21.17, by claiming this is all ‘for my name’s sake’ (ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος).

Thereafter, Paul’s mission unfolds in Acts, complete with an array of divinely ordained suffering, including the abuse and imprisonment suffered at Philippi (16.16-40). As Paul is making his final journey to Jerusalem, Luke focuses more on this foreboding theme, in the middle of Paul’s farewell speech to the Ephesian elders: ‘And now, behold, bound by the Spirit (δεδεμένος...τῷ πνεύματι), I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me’ (δεσμά και θλίψεις με μένουσιν, 20.22-23).

Paul’s response to this confirms his willingness to reject self-preservation as his highest priority, and to embrace this divine calling as a prisoner witness: ‘But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus (ὡς τελειῶσαι τὸν δρόμον μου και τὴν διακονίαν ἣν ἔλαβον παρὰ τοῦ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ), to testify solemnly of the gospel (διαμαρτύρασθαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον) of the grace of God’ (20.24). Note that for Paul to value his life, and avoid incarceration and affliction, would be to refuse the ministry of solemn witness which he has

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<sup>12</sup> Rapske, *Roman Custody*, 399. It seems more appropriate to say that Paul’s sufferings are a divinely ordained and vital *aspect* of his mission. The connection between mission and suffering is apparent.

received directly from the Lord Jesus himself. His divinely ordained mission inevitably involves his suffering and imprisonment.

This sense of impending suffering in Jerusalem is heightened when the Tyrian disciples ‘kept telling Paul through the Spirit not to set foot (*μὴ ἐπιβαίνειν*) in Jerusalem’ (21.4). Despite this, Paul continues in his resolve to follow the Spirit’s guidance and travel to Jerusalem. This is only confirmed when the prophet Agabus comes from Jerusalem to Caesarea, takes Paul’s belt, binds his feet and hands with it, and says, ‘This is what the Holy Spirit says: “In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind (*δήσουσιν*) the man who owns this belt and deliver (*παραδώσουσιν*) him into the hands of the Gentiles”’ (21.11). This prophetic action and declaration causes the observers to beg (*παρεκαλοῦμεν*) Paul not to go to Jerusalem (21.12), but Paul once again emphasizes his willingness to submit to his divine calling: ‘I am ready not only to be bound (*δεθῆναι*), but even to die (*ἀποθανεῖν*) at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus’ (21.13).<sup>13</sup>

Paul’s unshakeable resolve to fulfill the mandate leaves his observers to finally say, ‘The will of the Lord be done’ (*τοῦ Κυρίου τὸ θέλημα γινέσθω*, 21.14). These words recall Jesus’ own prayer in his time of personal agony and wrestling with God’s will (Lk 22.42), and are ‘not an expression of resignation, but a positive affirmation of the will of God.’<sup>14</sup> As Rapske explains, ‘No other expression could fix more firmly in the readers’ minds the assurance that...Paul...will be a prisoner witness in accordance with the divine will. In this, the Lord leads Paul and Paul unswervingly obeys...Paul is not simply a witness who has been imprisoned but one who fulfills the divine will as prisoner witness.’<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Note the repeated motif – Paul’s suffering is ‘on behalf of the name of the Lord Jesus’ (*ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ*). Cf. 5.41; 9.16; 15.26; Lk 21.12,17. Throughout Acts ‘the name (*ὄνομα*) of the Lord’ has great power and spiritual authority (19.17), for salvation (2.21; 3.16; 4.12; 10.43; 22.16), for baptism (2.38; 8.12,16; 10.48; 19.5), for healing (3.6; 4.10,30; 16.18; ), and for preaching (4.18; 5.28,40; 8.12; 9.27,28), and is even worthy of great suffering and death.

<sup>14</sup> Conzelmann, *Acts*, 178; cf. Marshall, *Acts*, 341.

<sup>15</sup> Rapske, *Roman Custody*, 411.



#### 15.1.1.4 Paul, the Suffering Missionary

These important episodes set the framework for understanding Paul's prison and trial narratives in Acts 22-28. Paul's incarceration does not end Paul's missionary work; instead, it furthers it, as a divinely ordained and unavoidable part of it. Paul is *both* a missionary witness and a suffering prisoner at the end of Acts – Rapske's designations of the 'suffering witness' and the 'prisoner-witness' are therefore helpful ways of understanding what Luke is meaning to convey throughout Acts, and particularly in Acts 22-28. As Rapske concludes:

Paul is declared at the outset to be destined to prosecute his missionary labour throughout Acts as *suffering witness*. We have a vigorously asserted synthesis. The spotlight of God's choice of Paul to be his witness and to be involved in a ministry of suffering as he is involved in missionary labour is focused upon Paul at the very outset of his ministry. And if there is any change whatsoever, it is not in the move from missionary to suffering witness, but in the focus and intensity of the divine spotlight of God's choice upon his life which demonstrates, to any who might doubt, that *as prisoner-witness Paul fulfils his missionary vocation*. Paul is indeed the *missionary-prisoner* for Luke; effective, appreciated and divinely approved in his free doings with all the struggles that attended in the earlier phase of his ministry as described in Acts and effective, appreciated and divinely approved in the tribulations of his bonds in the later phase of Acts.<sup>16</sup>

#### 15.2 Rhetorical Persecution Themes in Earlier Parts of Act

Why does Luke devote so much time to Paul's multiple trials, and end a book which is intended to inspire and equip his readers for mission in this way? As has been the case throughout this work, Luke has a clear rhetorical purpose in composing this final section of Acts. Luke is aware that the church of his day is undergoing a degree of persecution, and that if Christians increasingly engage in missional activity, this persecution will only strengthen. Increased mission will lead to intensified persecution, and one of the most likely outcomes of this opposition will be imprisonment and legal proceedings. Understood in this light, Luke is attempting to equip his readers in how to respond when they are brought to trial by their persecutors.<sup>17</sup> He is preparing them for the likely outcome of active missional engagement.

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<sup>16</sup> Rapske, *Roman Custody*, 436.

<sup>17</sup> As always, Luke's rhetorical purposes in Acts 22-28 are complex, and multi-faceted. He is clearly interested in discussing the early church's relationship with Judaism in this trial section: 'the overwhelming impression left by the speech material in the last quarter of Acts is that "the Way's" relationship to non-Christian Judaism is still very much a live issue for the author, requiring repeated instruction to his audience on this subject...the issues of debate with Judaism are positive and substantive – who is the Messiah, what is God's plan for his

Because imprisonment, trial, and possible martyrdom are the probable result for individual missionaries who follow Luke's instruction, it is logical that he ends Acts in this way.

Luke has already established that persecution is a normal part of following Christ in previous parts of Acts, in an attempt to reassure his readers when they undergo violent opposition.<sup>18</sup> His descriptions of these persecution episodes is rhetorical, and purposefully instructional.

The early trial and prison narratives are instructive. The two Sanhedrin trial episodes (4.5-22; 5.27-42) show readers that they should never compromise in their bold gospel message (4.8-13; 5.30-32), that they should always obey God rather than people (4.19-20; 5.29), that they should consider it an honour to suffer on behalf of Christ (5.40-41), and that even when they suffer cruelly, they should '*never stop teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ*' (οὐκ ἐπαύοντο διδάσκοντες καὶ εὐαγγελιζόμενοι τὸν Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν, 5.42).

Luke presents Stephen as the ideal Christian martyr to be imitated in similar situations (6.8-8.60): wise in his evangelistic arguments (6.9-10), uncompromising in his convictions (7.1-50), condemning in his judgment of the opposing religious authorities (7.51-53), serene and full of the Spirit in the face of violent opposition (6.15; 8.54-56), and even forgiving of the very ones who stone him to death (8.59-60; cf. Jesus' similar response, Lk 23.34,46).<sup>19</sup>

When the Jerusalem believers are scattered by persecution after Stephen's death, they 'preached the word wherever they went', even when fleeing death themselves (8.4). It is this

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people, who are included in that people, by what means are they included?', Witherington, *Acts*, 659-60. This is common among Acts scholarship, but this paper will argue that these purposes are actually secondary to Luke's ongoing missional rhetorical interests, which will continue unabated until the very end of his narrative.

<sup>18</sup> For the theme of the suffering and persecution of Christians, see §4.1.3; Acts 4.1-22; 5.17-40; 7.54-60; 8.1-4; 9.23-25; 11.19; 12.1-5; 13.50-51; 14.5-6,19-20; 16.40; 17.7-10,13-14; 20.1; 21.27-36. This is undoubtedly one of the most all-pervasive themes of the Acts narrative.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. H.-W. Neudorfer, 'The Speech of Stephen', *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, I. H. Marshall, D. Peterson, eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998): 275-94. While Neudorfer does not analyze the rhetorical value of Stephen's speech, it is a helpful literary and theological analysis of the main themes of this speech. This speech is significant in Acts, for as Roloff, *Apostel.*, 117, points out, it comprises about 5% of the book.

persecution which actually brings about the expansion of the mission, and the activity of missionaries in Samaria, Damascus, and Syrian Antioch. Luke's message is that Christians must unapologetically and fervently continue missional proclamation, even when they are fiercely opposed, and that God's sovereignty will guarantee the advancement of the word, in spite of the suffering its messengers must endure. This would have been of great reassurance to Luke's readers, who surely experienced sporadic similar circumstances.

These primary themes continue frequently throughout the Pauline mission (Acts 13-21).<sup>20</sup> An instructive episode is the imprisonment of Paul and Silas in Philippi (16.22-39). They are severely flogged and beaten, and then placed in the inner cell with stocks on their feet (16.22-24). Although this is painful, the narrative directs the reader's focus to their response: they pray and sing hymns of worship to God throughout the night (*Κατὰ δὲ τὸ μεσονύκτιον Παῦλος καὶ Σιλᾶς προσευχόμενοι ὕμνουσιν τὸν Θεόν*, 16.25). Paul and Silas are ideal prisoners, who respond to pain and opposition with prayer and worship, and their subsequent supernatural earth-shaking rescue and the salvation of their jailkeeper and his household are evidence of God's approval of their actions (16.26-34). Once again, Luke is instructing his readers through his narrative, and reassuring them of God's presence and protection in times of imprisonment and persecution.

### ***15.3 Missional Themes in Acts 22-28, and Luke's Rhetorical Purpose***

Having established a framework for understanding Acts 22-28, we can turn to Paul's trial and prison narratives in more detail. These stories reveal a prisoner who continues to be a missionary, and to engage actively in missional behavior. It is not simply that Paul's suffering is a part of his mission; Paul also continues to actively evangelize throughout his various trials and sufferings in the final part of Acts. This is the best way to understand Paul as a missionary-prisoner, and as a suffering witness – both facets of his calling are not

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<sup>20</sup> 13.50-51; 14.5-6,19-20; 16.40; 17.7-10,13-14; 20.1; 21.27-36.

mutually exclusive, but complement each other and continue simultaneously from his conversion to the very end of Acts. Paul is a suffering witness throughout the Acts narrative, according to God's divine will for him.

The thought that mission involves suffering is not new to the final section of Acts, but permeates all of Acts, as has been seen. Luke has established this theme firmly before Acts 22, but in the final episodes of Acts, he turns to more specific equipping of his readers in what to do when they are persecuted and brought to trial because of the name of Jesus. In this process, he revisits and develops many of the themes he has already initiated in previous parts of Acts. He does this once again through characterization, by presenting Paul as the ideal missionary-prisoner, worthy to be emulated by later Christians.<sup>21</sup>

#### *15.3.1 Paul in Jerusalem and Before the Sanhedrin (21.17-23.34)*

After arriving in Jerusalem, Paul greets James and the Jerusalem elders, and reports to them 'in detail (*καθ' ἕν ἕκαστον*, one by one) what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry' (21.17-19). At their urging, Paul undergoes a purification ritual at the Jerusalem temple (21.20-26). During this time, Jews from the province of Asia see Paul in the temple, and stir up a riot, which seizes Paul and drags him outside the temple confines, attempting to kill him (21.27-31).<sup>22</sup> The Roman commander hears of the commotion, rushes to arrest Paul, and commands the mob to stop beating Paul (21.28-36). Luke emphasizes the extreme level of violence the crowd has resorted to – they are trying to kill Paul (21.31), beating him (21.32), even pressing so violently that Paul has to be carried by the soldiers (21.35), and screaming 'Away with him!' (21.36).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> All of this should be understood in the light of Lk 21.12-19, as discussed above. That passage's main themes reverberate throughout this portion of the Acts narrative.

<sup>22</sup> Paul's ritual cleansing in the temple ironically has the opposite effect to what he intended: 'Rather than clearing Paul of a charge before Jewish Christians, it leads to a lengthy imprisonment with repeated accusations and trials', Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2.271.

<sup>23</sup> *Αἶρε αὐτόν* clearly means more that 'send him away', but it means 'do away with him!' Paul is clearly in real trouble here. Cf. the cry against Jesus in Lk. 23.18.

It is in this volatile environment that Paul reveals his Jewish identity and Tarsian citizenship to the Roman commander, and receives permission to speak to the crowd (21.37-40).<sup>24</sup> Luke depicts Paul as a man of heroic evangelistic courage here, who does not back down to his violent persecutors, and even wants to preach to them. Paul stands on the steps of the barracks in Jerusalem, motions boldly (*κατέσεισεν τῇ χειρὶ*) to the crowd, and when they fall silent he begins to speak. What follows is a classic example of bold missional proclamation in Acts (22.1-21).

As has been seen throughout Paul's mission, Paul expertly crafts a message of precise relevance to his hearers. He begins by attempting to establish rapport with his audience through speaking in Aramaic (*Ἑβραϊδὶ διαλέκτῳ*), which causes them to 'become very quiet' and listen closely – this gets their attention (21.40; 22.2, emphasized twice by Luke). He then addresses them as 'brothers and fathers' (*Ἄνδρες ἀδελφοὶ καὶ πατέρες*, 22.1), establishing himself as one of them, and not an outsider. Further, Paul emphasizes his strong Jewish credentials: a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, brought up in Jerusalem, and thoroughly trained in the law of the Jewish fathers under Gamaliel. He accents this with the audacious claim that he 'was just as zealous for God (*ζηλωτῆς ὑπάρχων τοῦ Θεοῦ*) as any of you are today' (22.3). Paul has now succeeded in not only getting their attention, but also in establishing a significant degree of commonality with his audience, and in convincing them of his own authority to speak to them. He succinctly articulates his pedigree to a Jewish audience zealous for the Law.

Paul then embarks upon a re-telling of his personal testimony, once again emphasizing his thorough Jewishness throughout. He tells how he used to persecute 'the followers of this Way,' arresting and beating many of them (22.4-5,19). He even emphasizes his role in the death of Stephen, an event some of his hearers would have remembered

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<sup>24</sup> For a helpful summary and updating of the many legal debates and implications in this section of Acts, see all of Rapske, *Roman Custody*, esp. 9-112.

(22.20). He speaks in detail of his conversion experience on the road to Damascus, of being met by Jesus of Nazareth, and of Ananias' early influence on him (22.6-16). But it is when he mentions the Lord sending him 'far away to the Gentiles' that the crowd has had enough, and grows violent again (22.17-22).

Most commentators consider this speech to be unsuccessful: 'as a defense speech it is a failure, for the verdict from the crowd, which is the judge here, is very negative.'<sup>25</sup> While this may be true from the perspective of a defense, it is at least mildly more successful when viewed from a missional perspective. Paul the missionary would have relished the opportunity to speak so boldly of 'Jesus of Nazareth' (22.8) and how his personal life had been changed by Christ's dramatic intervention to a massive crowd of Jews in the spiritual and geographical heart of the Jewish faith.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps Luke means for this speech to be seen as evangelistic and deliberative, rather than defensive and forensic – after all, Paul hardly pursues any sort of organized legal defense. Instead, he takes the opportunity to freely proclaim to the Jewish multitudes who Christ is, and how he has transformed his life. Though Luke does not report any direct evangelistic success, this episode can still be seen as a significant opportunity, and a strategic missional victory, in keeping with Paul's continual desire to proclaim the gospel message to as many people in as many places as he can.

As the crowd revolts again, the Roman commander takes Paul into custody in the barracks, presumably for his own protection, and then brings him before the Sanhedrin and the Jewish chief priests the next day. Paul is clearly not afraid to stand up for himself and boldly proclaim what he believes to be true, as is shown by his aggressive and argumentative interchange with the high priest Ananias (23.2-3), and also with the Sanhedrin as a whole

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<sup>25</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 675.

<sup>26</sup> Luke makes a point of saying 'the whole city was aroused, and the people came rushing together' (21.30) – he is emphasizing that this is a vast crowd, easily numbering into the thousands. This is not necessarily exaggerated, as such a mob was not an unprecedented phenomenon when a slight against Jewish customs and the Temple was perceived: Josephus, *War*, 1.88-89; 2.8-13,42-48,169-74,223-27,229-31,315-20,406-7,449-56. Johnson, *Acts*, 381.

(23.1,6-9). After realizing that he would not get a fair trial, Paul uses his belief in the resurrection of the dead to divide the Pharisees and the Sadducees in the assembly, provoking another intense dissension (σπάσις) in the assembly (23.7). The Pharisees' assessment of Paul is pivotal: 'We find nothing wrong with this man; suppose a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?' (23.9). This statement reveals that there is still hope that these Jewish leaders will be receptive to the missional claims of the gospel which Paul is making.<sup>27</sup> Paul is taken back into the barracks because the commander is afraid he will be torn in two by the violent dispute (23.10).

After the intensity of Paul's appearance before the Sanhedrin, Paul is in need of reassurance, which comes when the Lord stands near (ἐπιστάς ἀπὸ) <sup>28</sup> to Paul and says, 'Take courage (θάρσει); as you have testified (διεμαρτύρω) about me in Jerusalem,<sup>29</sup> so you must also testify (μαρτυρήσαι) in Rome' (23.11). This is a theme in Paul's story – such dramatic visions or reassurances consistently come at times of crisis or turning points.<sup>30</sup> However, the reader also realizes that there are no more miraculous escapes for Paul; this imprisonment is God's will, and Paul will have to see it to its natural end, whatever that may be.<sup>31</sup>

This verse is also an important clue to interpreting these trial sequences – Luke emphasizes, through Christ's words, that Paul's appearances in court are to be understood as

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<sup>27</sup> That the Pharisees thought it possible that Paul had had some special revelation from God or a spiritual being shows a promising degree of openness. Their verdict of Paul's innocence will be a recurring theme from now on, from the lips of both Jews and Gentiles (cf. 23.29; 25.18-20,25; 26.31,32); Soards, *Speeches*, 116. This is certainly partly a Lukan religious and political apology on Paul's behalf, but should also be seen as an indication of genuine missional potential – Luke has not written off the Jews at this point, but highlights their receptivity.

<sup>28</sup> This may be a technical phrase for a dream experience, D. E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983): 267; cf., Acts 12.7. However, it may also indicate a wakeful revelatory experience, such as at Lk. 2.9; 24.4. 'Whether the Lord comes to Paul in a vision as he sleeps, or appears to him as he is praying at Acts 23.11 cannot be determined', Rapske, *Roman Custody*, 419.

<sup>29</sup> This almost certainly refers to Paul's experiences and activities in Jerusalem just a few days before, rather than his much earlier preaching in Jerusalem at Acts 9.28-30, Rapske, *Roman Custody*, 420. Marshall, *Acts*, 367; Williams, *Acts*, 385; Krodell, *Acts*, 429 all note that the emphasis here is not on self-defense, but on evangelistic witness.

<sup>30</sup> E.g., 9.4; 16.9; 18.9; 22.17; 27.23-24. Bruce, *Acts*, 467.

<sup>31</sup> The Lord's reassurance must take the place of miraculously opening doors. The divine power that rescues from prison has become a powerful presence that enables the witness to endure an imprisonment that lasts for years', Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2.292.

explicitly missional testimony, as shown by the witness verbs μαρτυρέω and διαμαρτύρομαι.<sup>32</sup>

Luke also clarifies that just as this evangelistic witness has happened in Jerusalem (21.37-23.10), the centre of Judaism, so it must also happen in like manner in Rome, the heart of the Empire,<sup>33</sup> and that the completion of this mission in the Roman courts will require Paul to possess supernatural courage. 23.11 reveals that Luke means for the reader to understand this trial sequence as a vital part of Paul's overall missionary calling, and this comes from the authoritative mouth of Christ himself. 'As Paul has been a prisoner-witness before groups and authorities in Jerusalem, so in the same way he will be a prisoner-witness in Rome.'<sup>34</sup>

This divine message must have strengthened and encouraged Paul greatly. He would need this courage, for the Jews quickly form a conspiracy to kill Paul (23.12-15), which is thwarted when Paul's nephew overhears word of this violent plot (23.16-22). After hearing of their plans, the commander decides to transfer Paul to a more secure location in Caesarea that very night, under the protection of a large armed guard (23.23-35).<sup>35</sup>

What is Luke's rhetorical purpose in this portion of Paul's trial narrative? Luke is presenting Paul as a model prisoner-witness, who should be emulated when his readers find themselves in similar circumstances. They also ought to be bold in their missional proclamation, even when they are facing violent persecution, and always continue to preach the gospel. They should preach this message in a way that is relevant to their hearers, adapting it to fit their particular circumstances, and looking for ways of establishing rapport, commonality, and authority with their audience. In this sort of contentious setting, they should emphasize their own personal story and testimony, as a missional key which is much more difficult to dispute or debate than theological concepts. They should never be afraid to

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<sup>32</sup> As seen in §3.2.1.3, these verbs are consistently missional concepts throughout Acts.

<sup>33</sup> This saying is set in parallel terms and framed by the expression 'as...so' (ὡς...οὕτω), highlighting a direct connection and comparison between Paul's past missional activity in Jerusalem, and his future evangelism in Rome.

<sup>34</sup> Rapske, *Roman Custody*, 421.

<sup>35</sup> To protect Paul, Lysias opts for a change of venue, but not a change of jurisdiction, which is beyond his authority.



stand up for themselves, and even to defend themselves legally where required. They should be confident that Christ is with them, and will give them the strength and courage they need. And above all, they ought to see their suffering and imprisonment as an essential part of their evangelistic mission, as they follow in the footsteps of Paul, the archetypal prisoner-witness.

#### 15.2.2.2 Paul before Felix (24.1-27)

Acts 24 contains the account of Paul's first Roman trial, before Felix, the governor (ἡγεμῶν) of Judea.<sup>36</sup> Paul's accusers present their arguments (24.1-9), which have a ring of truth to them, at least in that Paul has stirred up riots (κινουῦντα στάσεις – dissensions, insurrections) among the Jews all over the world, and that he is a ring-leader of the Nazarene sect (πρωτοστάτην τε τῆς τῶν Ναζωραίων αἰρέσεως). However, what is clearly false from Luke's perspective is that Paul is a troublemaker (λοιμόν – pest, plague),<sup>37</sup> and that he has tried to desecrate or profane the temple (τὸ ἱερόν ἐπίρασεν βεβηλώσαι, 24.5-6).

Paul defends himself vehemently and confidently from these unjust accusations, directly responding to the claims about the temple (24.10-12). He even says, 'they cannot prove to you the charges they are now making against me' (24.13). However, he admits that he worships God as a follower of 'the Way, which they call a sect' (τὴν ὁδὸν ἣν λέγουσιν αἵρεσιν, 24.14). But he emphasizes that this Way is a part of Judaism, and that he has the same basic hopes in God as his accusers do (24.14-16). Then he turns to recounting his own personal story, and explains why he is in Jerusalem, and stresses that he was ceremonially clean when they found him in the temple, and was not involved in any disturbances of any kind (24.17-21). Once again, Paul is responding directly to the accusations made against him

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<sup>36</sup> Felix is a freedman, and Tacitus says of him that he 'practiced every kind of cruelty and lust, wielding the power of a king with all the instincts of a slave' (*Ann.*, 12.54; cf. *Hist.*, 5.9). Like many Romans, he is anti-Semitic, and deals with the Jewish zealots brutally and cruelly, alienating many Jews. Witherington, *Acts*, 699.

<sup>37</sup> This word implies that Paul is like a contagious disease or plague, spreading disruption and even revolution everywhere he goes throughout the Roman world, Cassidy, *Society and Politics*, 104.

here point by point, emphasizing his personal journey, and expertly defending himself from the accusations made against him.<sup>38</sup>

Felix adjourns the proceedings, and several days later he and his wife Drusilla return to Paul (24.22-23). They listen to him as he speaks about faith in Jesus Christ (περὶ τῆς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν πίστεως, 24.24), a clear indication of missional proclamation on Paul's part. Luke emphasizes this further by adding that Paul discourses on righteousness/justice, self-control/chastity and the coming judgment (διαλεγομένου δὲ αὐτοῦ περὶ δικαιοσύνης καὶ ἐγκρατείας καὶ τοῦ κριματος τοῦ μέλλοντος), to the point where Felix becomes terrified (ἔμφοβος – an intensified form of fear), though not repentant, and dismisses Paul (24.25). Felix leaves Paul in prison for two years as a favor to the Jews, until he is succeeded by Festus (24.26-27).<sup>39</sup>

This exchange between Paul and Felix and Drusilla can only be understood in one way – an evangelistic conversation, in which Paul expounds boldly on faith in Jesus Christ in general, and specifically on God's requirements of righteousness and self-control, and his impending judgment of all people. It is not a formal legal or trial setting, but an informal verbal exchange. It is remarkable that even in custody, before possibly the most powerful person in Judea, who holds Paul's fate in his hands, Paul boldly proclaims the gospel. Once again, Luke presents Paul as the ideal missionary-witness, who is actively furthering the mission, even when he is in prison and on trial.

This scene before Felix emphasizes to Luke's readers that they should actively defend themselves when they are accused unjustly in court. It recalls Christ's promise in Lk 21.15

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<sup>38</sup> 'The author of Acts intended his readers to see Paul handling his defence with great dexterity, and refuting these charges. He had done this by prescribing the limits of the evidence based on Roman law proscribing the charges of absent accusers, using forensic terminology, and not least of all, presenting a well argued defence, even if preserved in summary form', B. W. Winter, 'Official Proceedings and the Forensic Speeches in Acts 24-26', *Acts in its Ancient Literary Setting*, B. W. Winter, A. D. Clarke, eds., AIIFCS 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993): 305-35, citing 327.

<sup>39</sup> The length of this delay, and the real reasons for it, are unclear; Weiser, *Apostel.*, 2.627.

that when his followers are brought to trial he will give utterance and wisdom which none of their opponents will be able to resist or refute. Luke stresses again that the Christian defendant should recount their own story, in their own words. And he challenges a Christian in prison and on trial to see this persecution as a vital part of their mission, and to continue in active mission at every possibility, particularly when before the highest of rulers. Luke sees the chance to evangelize a person of such tremendous influence as a truly extraordinary opportunity, full of unique potential, and urges his readers to take full advantage of any similar opportunities.

### 15.2.2.3 Paul before Festus and Agrippa (25.1-26.32)

When Festus succeeds Felix, another trial scene transpires in Caesarea.<sup>40</sup> After the Jews from Jerusalem have made their accusations against Paul (25.1-6), Luke describes a very adversarial scene: Paul is surrounded by his accusers, who make many serious charges (*πολλά καὶ βαρέα αἰτιώματα*) against him (25.7). Paul once again strongly and comprehensively defends himself (*ἀπολογουμένου* – to exculpate oneself legally): ‘I have done nothing wrong against the law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar’ (*οὔτε εἰς τὸν νόμον τῶν Ἰουδαίων οὔτε εἰς τὸ ἱερόν οὔτε εἰς Καίσαρά τι ἥμαρτον*, 25.8). When Festus brings up the idea of returning to Jerusalem for trial, Paul again vigorously and forcefully insists that he has done nothing wrong, as Festus himself knows (25.9-10). But to avoid going back to Jerusalem, where he will likely be killed along the way in an ambush (25.3), Paul successfully appeals as a Roman citizen to the highest authority, to Caesar himself (25.11-12). Though he does not do this flippantly, Paul is not afraid to make the most of his legal rights, particularly when his life is unjustly at stake (25.12).<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Little is known about Porcius Festus, for relevant sources are limited to Acts 25-26, and Josephus, *Ant.*, 20.182-97; *War*, 2.271. He appears to be more honest and honorable than his predecessor, Felix.

<sup>41</sup> ‘Paul does not lightly or cavalierly exercise his right of appealing to Caesar. Similar to the earlier two instances in which he claimed his rights of citizenship, Luke again depicts Paul asserting his right to appeal before a small, predominantly Roman, group and only at the point in the proceedings when he could no longer

When King Agrippa and Bernice arrive in Caesarea shortly after this and hear about Paul's case from Festus, they request to hear Paul themselves (25.13-22). This sets the stage for the great missional trial message in Acts, which Festus dramatically introduces (25.23-27). This brings about a further fulfillment of what Jesus had promised long ago – that his witnesses, and specifically Paul, would testify evangelistically before kings and governors (Lk. 21.12-13; Acts 9.15). The following scene is not technically a trial, since Paul's appeal to Caesar has already been granted, but more of a judicial inquiry (*ἀνακρίσεως* – preliminary investigation, 25.26). Paul's speech is in some ways the climax of all of Paul's speeches in Acts, and also a succinct summary of the evangelistic Christological message that Luke is conveying in Acts.<sup>42</sup>

When Paul is given permission to speak, he immediately turns to recounting his own personal story in some detail, beginning with his childhood and his training as a Pharisee (26.1-5). Then he focuses on the contentious theological issue at hand – the resurrection of the dead (26.6-8). Paul resumes his personal story by speaking of his zeal 'to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth' (*πρὸς τὸ ὄνομα Ἰησοῦ τοῦ Ναζωραίου δεῖν πολλὰ ἐναντία πράξειν*, 26.9), and his widespread early persecution of Christians (26.10-11). This leads into another re-telling of his Damascus Road conversion experience (26.12-18), where Christ himself comes to Paul and calls him to be a missionary: 'I have appeared to you *to appoint you as a servant and a witness* (*ὑπηρέτην καὶ μάρτυρα*) of what you have seen of me and what I will show you...I am sending you to them [the Gentiles, or nations, *τῶν ἐθνῶν*] to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God...' (26.16-18). In this summary of his missionary calling, Paul articulates his understanding of a dual calling, as

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tolerate a course of action being proposed by a Roman official...Paul exercised his right of appeal only under considerable pressure', Cassidy, *Society and Politics*, 109.

<sup>42</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2.315-29; Witherington, *Acts*, 735-53.

both a servant and a witness of Christ. Luke also implies that Paul's appearance before Festus and Agrippa is a part of the fulfillment of this calling.<sup>43</sup>

Paul then continues to tell his story, and to summarize his post-conversion mission to both Jews and Gentiles (26.19-21). Significantly, Paul has declared (*ἀπήγγελλον*) to those at Damascus, and also 'at Jerusalem, throughout all the districts of Judea, and to the nations' (26.20). Paul's mission after Damascus follows the course that Jesus prescribed for his witnesses in Acts 1.8.<sup>44</sup> This description emphasizes the ethnic and geographical inclusiveness of Paul's mission, which is for all people everywhere.<sup>45</sup>

This mission has directly caused the Jews to seize him, but Paul has had God's help throughout the mission, 'and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike (*μαρτυρόμενος μικρῶ τε καὶ μεγάλῳ*)...that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles' (26.22-23).<sup>46</sup> This statement reminds the reader that Paul understands that he is on trial chiefly to testify (*μαρτυρέω*) about the gospel of Christ, and that he sees this as a unique opportunity to evangelize to rulers, kings, and other people of great influence (*μεγάλῳ*), and also to people of less significance (*μικρῶ*).<sup>47</sup> Once again, Luke is highlighting Paul, the model missionary-prisoner, and a missional strategy of having the greatest impact by reaching out to people of influence.

Festus and Agrippa's dramatic reaction to this statement makes it clear that this is Paul's intending meaning, for they are immediately on the defensive, and Festus accuses Paul

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<sup>43</sup> Paul seems to feel that this calling applies as much to his current audience as to any other he has been before. This also emphasizes that God's hand continues to be on Paul, and reassures the reader that God's will will be done.

<sup>44</sup> 'It begins in Jerusalem, spreads to the surrounding region, and then moves out to encompass the world (a gigantic development that both statements summarize in a brief phrase). Thus it is probably that Paul is being presented as sharing the mission given to Jesus' first witnesses in 1.8', Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2.326. There are also parallels with Jesus' commission to his first witnesses in Lk 24.44-48.

<sup>45</sup> This is a clear theme in Acts, as shown in §6.1 and §6.2.

<sup>46</sup> 'Here we have one of the more compact and helpful summaries of the essential apostolic kerygma, proclaimed by Peter, Paul, Philip, and others, as the first fourteen chapters of Acts have revealed', Witherington, *Acts*, 747. There are also multiple deliberate parallels with Jesus' last speech, in Lk 24.44-48.

<sup>47</sup> Luke once again accentuates the inclusiveness of the mission, which is for all social classes here, cf. §6.3.

of going insane, to which Paul responds that he is not a ‘maniac’ (οὐ μαίνομαι), but is speaking words of sober truth, and boldly asks whether Agrippa believes the prophets (26.24-27). King Agrippa then asks Paul an astounding question: ‘Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to become a Christian?’ (ἐν ὀλίγῳ με πείθεις Χριστιανὸν ποιῆσαι, 26.28).<sup>48</sup> Agrippa realizes that this is Paul’s intention, and Paul’s uncompromising response confirms his true purposes: ‘Short time or long – I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am (οὐ μόνον σὲ ἀλλὰ καὶ πάντας τοὺς ἀκούοντάς μου σήμερον γενέσθαι τοιούτους ὅποῖος καὶ ἐγὼ εἰμι), except for these chains’ (26.29).

Paul’s statement here is critical to interpreting these trial sequences. Paul acknowledges that there are many people present, listening to his testimony, and affirms that his ultimate desire is that whether it takes a short or a long time (or little or much argument), every one of them would become a follower of Christ. Luke is showing the reader that ultimately, whatever else they are, Paul views his trials as opportunities for evangelistic mission, to an audience that probably would have little other chance to hear the message about Jesus Christ. Paul not only boldly confirms that he hopes that King Agrippa will become a Christian, but also that every other person there will convert as well. He turns the tables on his accusers and judges, and challenges them to consider the faith claims which he is making: ‘In the end, Festus gets frustrated, and it is Agrippa who is backpedaling and on the defensive!’<sup>49</sup> Evangelizing kings and rulers is the ultimate culmination of Paul’s clear missional strategy of sharing with people of influence throughout Acts, and he realizes that if people such as Festus and Agrippa were to believe, it would have a massive effect on the spread of the Christian mission throughout Judea, and the larger Roman world.

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<sup>48</sup> 26.28 is a complex verse to translate and interpret; cf. Witherington, *Acts*, 750-51 for a summary of the issues. It may be that Agrippa is saying ‘with so few arguments, do you hope to convince me?’ The tone does not seem to be bitter or sarcastic, but incredulous, as King Agrippa is questioned by Paul.

<sup>49</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 736.

Haenchen argues that 'Luke no longer hoped for the conversion of the Jews...though Paul speaks in Chapter 22 to the Jewish people, in 23 to the Sanhedrin and in 26 to King Agrippa. Luke with all this is not canvassing for a last-minute conversion.'<sup>50</sup> This is an inaccurate interpretation of this speech, for as shown above, Luke goes to great lengths in this episode to present Paul as the model evangelist, including evangelism to Jews. Tannehill's missional interpretation of this exchange between Paul and Agrippa is more accurate:

The vivid portrait of Paul seeking to convert a high-ranking Jew is more than a memorial to a lost past. *Heroic figures (like Paul in Acts) inevitably become models of behavior, and Paul's farewell to the Ephesian elders (20.18-35) indicates awareness that Paul could be an effective model for the later church.* Paul's exemplary behavior includes his dedicated witness to both Jews and Gentiles (cf. 20.21). *The portrait of Paul before Agrippa has, in part, the same exemplary function.* The previous defense scenes lay the foundation for this portrait of Paul as model evangelist...*Paul is being presented as a dedicated and resourceful evangelist who is able to keep the mission to Jews alive in difficult times.*<sup>51</sup>

Luke intentionally presents Paul as an exemplary missionary in this court scene before Agrippa, who is worthy of emulation by later Christians. Paul's speech is not really a technical defense speech, but a testimonial witness speech. 'The whole speech leads forward toward...an appeal to Agrippa and others to become as Paul is, except for the chains. Paul is bearing witness to a Jewish king by means of a rehearsal of his own life, in the context of a judicial hearing.'<sup>52</sup>

Rhetorically, Luke is advocating trials such as this as an ideal and rare opportunity for proclamation. Rather than 'making the most of a difficult situation', Luke is challenging his readers to grasp the evangelistic potential of such circumstances, and to maximize the missional opportunities which they present. It was surely quite rare for a Christian to actually have an audience with a king or governor (much less both), and so Luke is encouraging his readers to take hold of the potential for witness to persons of such wide-sweeping influence.

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<sup>50</sup> Haenchen, *Acts*, 328.

<sup>51</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2.328-29.

<sup>52</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 736. This also further fulfills Luke's aims, as articulated in Acts 1.8: the gospel is going not only to the ends of the earth, but also to every person, to both the high and the low.

Even though there is no visible conversion response in the narrative, Luke's readers would have understood the strategic missional value of Paul's interaction with this Roman court.

Luke has gone to great lengths throughout Acts to show that the gospel is for everyone, everywhere, including the upper class social elite and even the politically mighty.<sup>53</sup> He ends this convincing argument by showing how the gospel reaches the powerful Jewish and Greco-Roman elite through Paul's bold witness. For Luke, the fact that Paul is able to testify freely before the high priest and the Sanhedrin, and before elite rulers such as Felix, Festus, and Agrippa, is the ultimate 'proof' of the Christian movement's access and appeal to the highest classes. Luke hints that Paul will even testify before the highest authority of them all, Caesar himself (23.11; 27.24). Luke repeatedly emphasizes the significance of missional opportunities such as this is.

In addition to this, Luke continues to advocate that a Christian on trial should fervently defend him or herself, and take full advantage of any legal rights which he or she may possess. Luke is also emphasizing the power of a person's personal testimony about Christ, and what he has done in their lives, as a vital legal tool for defense, and for missional proclamation. This is more difficult to dispute than theological or legal concepts, and also allows the defendant to go on the offensive, and ask questions of his or her accusers. Above all, Luke is instructing his readers that when they are on trial for their faith and mission, they are missionary-prisoners, with a divine mandate to boldly proclaim the gospel in that uniquely strategic environment.

#### *15.2.2.4 Storms and Shipwreck (27.1-44)*

Paul's journey to Rome underscores the previous point – Paul's ultimate strategic and influential missional audience is Caesar himself. When Festus exclaims, 'You have appealed

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<sup>53</sup> See ch. 6 for Luke's universalized theology, and §6.3.4.1 for examples of the 'upper' classes in Acts. Many examples of the missional strategy of targeting people of influence were mentioned throughout part 4. Felix, Festus, and Agrippa are clear examples of the gospel reaching the political elite, even if they do not immediately accept it.



to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!’ (25.12), he is granting Paul the right to bring his gospel message before the ruler of the entire Roman Empire. This helps to explain why Paul does not take up the offer of his own personal freedom – Paul could clearly travel to Rome on his own, even with the dangers of violence at the hands of the Jews, but he will not be granted an audience with Caesar any other way than through the Roman legal system (26.31-32).

Testifying to Caesar represents the ultimate fulfilment of the missional strategy of evangelistically targeting people of influence which Luke advocates throughout Acts. Paul recognizes the once in a lifetime opportunity that this presents, and so is content to wait on the Roman judicial process.

Paul finally sails for Rome along with some other prisoners, under the centurion Julius (27.1-12). A fierce ‘northeaster’ (Εύρακύλων) overtakes their ship off the shore of Crete, and drives them across the storm-tossed Adriatic Sea for two weeks (27.13-26). Finally, the ship runs aground on a sandbar near Malta, and all of its occupants swim or float safely to the island on planks and pieces of the ship (27.27-44). This adventurous journey is vividly described by Luke, in one of the most famous narrative passages in Acts.

During the storm, an angel (ἄγγελος, 27.23) appears to Paul, and confirms how crucial it is for Paul to testify to Caesar: ‘Do not be afraid Paul. You must stand before Caesar’ (μὴ φοβοῦ, Παῦλε· Καίσαρ σε δεῖ παραστῆναι, 27.24a).<sup>54</sup> The angel continues that, ‘God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you’ (27.24b).<sup>55</sup> Once again, Luke affirms Paul’s divine mandate to appear before the centre of Roman power and government; the δεῖ

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<sup>54</sup> The parallels with Paul’s earlier divine reassurance are obvious (23.11); Aune, *Prophecy*, 268.

<sup>55</sup> Paul has apparently been praying for the physical salvation and preservation of his shipmates, and God reassures him that these prayers have been answered, and their lives are given to him as a ‘gift’ (χαρίζομαι).

confirms that he will bear witness at the very heart of the Empire.<sup>56</sup> The implication is that God is sovereignly orchestrating circumstances to bring this encounter to pass.

Just before the shipwreck, Paul appears to publicly perform the Eucharist: ‘he took some bread and gave thanks to God *in the presence of them all* (λαβὼν ἄρτον εὐχαρίστησεν τῷ Θεῷ ἐνώπιον πάντων). Then he broke it (κλάσας) and began to eat. They were all encouraged and ate some food themselves’ (27.35-36).<sup>57</sup> Paul has not withheld his identity as a Christian throughout this journey (27.3,10,21-26,34), but Luke emphasizes the public nature of this sacred Christian act of communion and thanksgiving, and implies that all 276 of the ship’s occupants witness Paul breaking the bread (ἅπας or πᾶς, ‘all’ is repeated four times, 27.33,35,36,37). This action is clearly intended to invoke the sacrament of the Eucharist.<sup>58</sup>

When one remembers that the Eucharist represents the body and blood of Christ being given for all people, this act takes on a subtle but important missional dimension.<sup>59</sup> The symbolic action of publicly breaking bread is Paul’s way of ‘preaching’ the gospel to them appropriately in this traumatic situation.<sup>60</sup> His message is confirmed when Paul’s prophetic prediction that the ship will run aground on an island and be destroyed but none of them would die (27.22,26,34) comes to pass exactly as he had said (27.41-44). The Spirit-inspired

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<sup>56</sup> ‘The divine assurance given specifically to Paul at Acts 27.23f. is to be the hermeneutical tool with which Luke’s readers interpret the remaining threats of storm, summary execution, shipwreck and snakebite which Paul experiences’, Rapske, *Roman Custody*, 421.

<sup>57</sup> Whether this is the Christian Eucharist or not is debated by scholars; see Witherington, *Acts*, 772-73 for a summary of this discussion. ‘Paul’s insistence on taking food at this stage, when the very people charged with sailing the vessel have just demonstrated their own hopelessness [27.30], constitutes a sign of hope and confidence in God...If it is not the bread of the Eucharist, it is the bread of hope’, Gaventia, *Acts*, 355.

<sup>58</sup> Schneider, *Apostel.*, 2.397; Weiser, *Apostel.*, 2.664-65. ‘Had the narrator not wished to evoke the sacrament, he could simply have said “Paul ate”. The meal is not itself a Eucharist, since those present are not believers, but it evokes the Eucharist...The action symbolizes the life brought by God through Jesus. The means for bringing people to faith is mission. Acts 27.33-38...has a universal, missionary thrust’, Pervo, *Acts*, 664.

<sup>59</sup> Luke even says Paul εὐχαρίστησεν. This is particularly true in light of Lk 22.19: ‘And when he had taken bread and given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me”’, and the four breaking bread references in Acts, all using the identical words (κλάω or κλάσις, and ἄρτος): 2.42,46; 20.7,11. Cf. 1 Cor. 11.23-26 for Paul’s understanding of the Lord’s Supper.

<sup>60</sup> This is not to claim that this meal is Luke’s symbolic way of claiming that all of Paul’s shipmates are spiritually saved; there is nothing in Luke-Acts to indicate that Luke believes that salvation comes by taking part in the Lord’s Supper. It may simply be the customary Jewish form of blessing the meal, but Luke does emphasize the public nature of this symbolic meal. He also follows it directly by mentioning that there are 276 total people on the boat.

prophetic message is confirmed to everyone on the boat, which affirms Paul's divine authority. Even in such dire and life-threatening circumstances, Paul continues to be the suffering witness.

#### 15.2.2.5 In Malta (28.1-10)

In the middle of this traumatic journey, a supernatural missional episode occurs. Paul is bit by a poisonous viper (ἔχιδνα) on Malta (Μελίτη) while gathering brushwood for a fire, and miraculously survives and suffers no ill effects (ἔπαθεν οὐδὲν κακόν, 28.1-5). The people had assumed that this was Justice (ἡ δίκη) catching up to Paul (28.4), but change their minds and decide he is a god after seeing Paul survive the deadly snake bite (28.6).<sup>61</sup> Luke provides no more details about this episode, but implies that such an experience created quite a reputation for Paul on the island. Luke portrays Paul's survival as a miracle, which is naturally unexplainable, and which has quite an effect on the Maltese.

This episode paves the way for what happens next, for Publius, the chief official of the island (τῷ πρώτῳ τῆς νήσου ὀνόματι Ποπλίῳ), welcomes them into his wealthy estate for three days (28.7).<sup>62</sup> Paul prays for Publius' father, who has fever and dysentery, and after placing his hands on him, he is instantly and supernaturally healed (προσευξάμενος ἐπιθείς τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῷ ἴασατο αὐτόν, 28.8). This miracle only adds to Paul's burgeoning reputation on the island, and all of the rest of the sick on the island come to him and are also miraculously cured (οἱ λοιποὶ οἱ ἐν τῇ νήσῳ ἔχοντες ἀσθενείας προσήρχοντο καὶ ἐθεραπεύοντο, 28.9).

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<sup>61</sup> Paul surviving the snake bite is a fulfillment of Lk 10.19: 'I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and *nothing will injure you*.' Cf. Mk 16.18. 'In Luke's Gospel, Jesus delegates to the disciples the authority to 'tread on' snakes and serpents, creatures associated with Satan, without themselves being harmed...Paul is not healed from the viper's attack so much as he is simply immune to it, and his immunity comes not from his own resources, but from the God who called him and delivered him safely from shipwreck', Gaventa, *Acts*, 358-59.

<sup>62</sup> Publius is probably the governor/magistrate of Malta, although he could also be the wealthiest leading citizen of the island, and thus the patron/benefactor of the region. Johnson, *Acts*, 462. It is typical of Luke to associate Paul with the leading figures of a location (cf. 13.7; 16.22; 17.19; 18.12; 19.31).

This unexpected explosion of miracles on Malta is a surprising Pauline missional encounter. Although Luke does not specifically say that Paul evangelized in Malta, Luke has clearly established this pattern many times over in Acts, and it is inconceivable to think of Paul not explaining the gospel to people as he prays for and ministers to them. In Acts, supernatural signs and wonders are the confirmation of the gospel, and the ultimate validation of Paul's message. Luke implies that Paul enjoys dramatic missional success on Malta, largely through the miraculous validation of his ministry in the form of surviving a venomous snake bite, and then healing many across the island.

Luke underscores this assumption by emphasizing that the locals 'honored us in many ways and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed' (28.10).<sup>63</sup> This is the material benefit offered to someone from whom one has benefitted spiritually, and acknowledges that Paul and his travelling companions are regarded as 'holy men' by the islanders. Whether a church community is begun in Malta is unclear, but as Johnson explains, the sharing of possessions is a sign in Luke-Acts of sharing in the good news, and so Luke almost certainly means for us to understand that Paul did indeed share the Gospel in Malta.<sup>64</sup>

The Malta episode duplicates many of the missional strategies that can be seen throughout Paul's missionary journeys in Acts. Publius is an ideal person of influence/peace, as a wealthy householder, and the head of the local elite ruling class on the island. By inviting Paul and his companions into his οἶκος, he is extending the all-important hospitality invitation, and explicitly endorsing both Paul and his message. It is Publius' influence and reputation which ultimately open the way for Paul to minister in such a widespread way

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<sup>63</sup> Πολλαῖς τιμαῖς ἐτίμησαν can mean honors, or gifts/payments (Acts 4.43; 5.2-3; 7.16; 19.19). Regardless, the next phrase spells out the gift of possessions from the islanders.

<sup>64</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 463. For examples, cf. Lk. 6.32-36; 8.3; 12.32-34; 14.13-14; 18.22; 21.1-4; Acts 2.42-47; 4.32-37. 'Since Paul has elsewhere preached, [many interpreters] assume that he preaches here also. Given the character of these chapters as a reprise of earlier elements of Acts, and given the clear declaration at the end of chapter 28 that Paul continues to preach and teach, the traditional view has some force', Gaventa, *Acts*, 362.

across the island. Paul relies on miracles and signs and wonders to assist in the spread of the message, and to validate Paul's ministry. He quickly gains a regional influence across the entire island, as is underscored by the way 'the rest of the sick on the island' come to him for healing.<sup>65</sup> Luke claims that the entire population of Malta is impacted by Paul's missional presence there over three months (28.11). However, Luke is eager to move his story on to its true culmination, in Rome.

#### *15.2.2.6 In Rome*

Paul and the travelling group depart by ship after three months in Malta, and following multiple brief stops, finally arrive in Rome (28.11-15). Paul is allowed to live by himself under house arrest in Rome, with a soldier to guard him (28.16). After nearly three years of captivity, trials, and travel, Paul the missionary-prisoner has at last arrived in the power centre of the Roman Empire.

When three days in Rome have passed, Paul calls together the leaders of the Jews in Rome, and begins to defend himself to them (28.17-20). Once again, he emphasizes his own personal story (28.17) and his innocence (28.18), and ends by declaring, 'It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain' (28.20).<sup>66</sup> While they might understand this ambiguous reference to be Yahweh, Paul is primarily referring to Christ, and to the resurrection of the dead (26.6-8,22-23). Paul also ensures that he has no charge to bring against the Jews (28.19), and the overall effect of this speech is 'to indicate the true Jewishness of Paul (vv. 17, 20), make clear his innocence, and place the ultimate blame for

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<sup>65</sup> Luke may be implying that a local house church begins in Publius' home, and that this influential οἶκος provides the social networks and relational connections which catalyze a regional church-planting movement, based around Publius' house and household, and carried forward by the momentum of miraculous healings. Though the text does not state these things, the similar missional patterns and strategies which emerge earlier in Acts point in this direction (part 4). It is impossible to imagine Paul being in a place such as this for three months, while seeing the sick miraculously healed, without sharing the gospel with them, but what the actual results of such missional activity are on Malta is uncertain. Tannehill claims that Luke's focus here is on 'images of cooperative relationships between Christians and non-Christians, to the benefit of all', *Narrative Unity*, 2.340.

<sup>66</sup> This whole interaction between Paul and the Roman Jews should be understood as Luke's way of clarifying Paul's relationship with Judaism, and insisting that Paul's missionary work (and those who would follow him in subsequent generations) is not anti-Jewish in any way. Witherington, *Acts*, 793.

his predicament on the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem, not on the Roman Jewish leaders, against whom Paul had nothing.’<sup>67</sup>

The Jews reply that they have not heard anything about Paul, and that they would like to hear more about what his views are, for ‘people everywhere are talking against this sect’ (*αἰρέσεως*, 28.21-22; cf. 17.6). So an even larger number of Jews come and meet with Paul at a later time. This is in keeping with Paul’s missionary strategy in a new location, to go to the Jews first, and then to the Gentiles (13.42-48; 18.5-7; 19.8-10). Paul senses an ideal evangelistic opportunity within the Roman Jewish Diaspora.

This leads to the most explicit missional activity in the final section of Acts. Luke reports that, ‘from morning till evening he explained (*ἐξέτθετο*) and declared (*διαμαρτυρούμενος*) to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince (*πειθῶν*) them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets’ (28.23). Each of these verbs is an indicator of missional activity in Acts, and it is significant that Paul is able to expound to these Roman Jews about the kingdom of God thoroughly, for an entire day. Their response is predictably varied: ‘Some were convinced (*ἐπειθοντο*) by what he said, but others would not believe’ (28.24). This partially positive response is important, because it indicates the only explicitly successful missionary activity in the final portion of Acts.<sup>68</sup> The verb *πειθῶ* is used elsewhere in Acts to unambiguously indicate heartfelt conviction and conversion.<sup>69</sup> The contrast between those who are persuaded, and those who ‘refuse to believe’ (*ἠπίστουν*) also points towards real belief on the part of some of these Roman Jews. Here in Rome, Paul is

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<sup>67</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 799.

<sup>68</sup> However, missional success is surely relative. Although there are no conversions mentioned in Jerusalem, or in the trial scenes, Luke (and Paul) would surely see the ability to boldly proclaim the gospel to these high (or huge) audiences as a success in its own right. For Luke, the missionary goal is to declare the good news; the response of the hearer is an entirely separate issue. Understood this way, the final portion of Acts is full of evangelistic success.

<sup>69</sup> E.g., 13.43; 14.1-2; 17.4; 19.8-9; Polhill, *Acts*, 542. The parallels between this scene and 13.44-47 also point towards genuine conversion on the part of some of the Roman Jews. Witherington, *Acts*, 800-2.

still actively engaged in his mission, proclaiming the gospel boldly and in a way that requires a response on the part of its hearers.

When Paul quotes Isa 6.9-10 and speaks about God's salvation being sent to the Gentiles, many of them begin to leave (28.25-27). As has happened in multiple other locations during his mission, Paul has given the Jews an opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel, but after many of them have rejected the message, he turns deliberately to the Gentiles, for he knows from experience that, 'they will listen!' (*ἀκούσονται*, 28.28).

Luke summarizes Paul's missionary calling by saying, 'God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles' (28.27), and reminds the reader once again that even though Paul is not a free man, and is awaiting trial in Rome, he is still carrying out a divinely ordained mission. Luke presents Paul as the primary instigator of this Gentile mission, and the prototype missionary to emulate, but he is also actively seeking to involve his readers in the ongoing mission to the Gentiles in his day. By adding 'and they will listen', he is encouraging his readers that they will find a receptive and responsive audience amongst the Gentiles, even as Paul does.

This saying need not be understood as a categorical rejection of mission to the Jews,<sup>70</sup> but should be interpreted as the continuation of the missional paradigm which Paul has always possessed: to the Jew first, and then to the Gentile. It is likely that as Luke is writing Acts, 20-25 years after this episode, the issue of Jewish inclusion has not been fully settled. Luke is calling his church back to the practice of the early Pauline mission as he presents it in Acts, and advocating that Christ-followers reach out to both Jews and Gentiles everywhere they go.

Luke summarizes that 'for two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house (*ἐν ἰδίῳ μισθώματι*) and welcomed all who came to see him' (28.30). Here is Paul, under house arrest, probably bound with a chain (28.20), and guarded continually by a soldier

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<sup>70</sup> Particularly given that a number of Jews have just responded positively to the gospel (28.24). Jervell sees this passage marking the separation of the church from 'the unbelieving component of Judaism', *Apostel.*, 631.

(28.16), making even this house a base for missional expansion in Rome. Luke says that there is already a church in Rome (28.14-15), so these visits may also be for the instruction and building up of the existing Roman Christian community. Paul is no longer mobile, and yet he continues his mission by making his private *οἶκος* into a hub for mission and edification in Rome. Paul is still the ideal missionary-prisoner in Rome, faithfully ministering to all who come his way.

This is underscored by the final verse in Acts, which ends the narrative on a triumphant note by depicting Paul, ‘preaching the kingdom of God (*κηρύσσων τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ*) and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ (*διδάσκων τὰ περὶ τοῦ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*) with all boldness, unhindered’ (*μετὰ πάσης παρρησίας ἀκωλύτως*, 28.31). Each of these words is full of meaning for Luke. Paul has a two-fold ministry in Rome: evangelistically preaching (*κηρύσσω*) the Kingdom of God, and teaching (*διδάσκω*) about the Lord Jesus, presumably to new Christians and the existing church, although both words can be missional in nature in Acts. But most significantly, Paul is doing these things boldly (*παρρησία*, with freedom and boldness of speech) and freely (*ἀκωλύτως*, without any hindrance).<sup>71</sup> This implies that there is a deep confidence in Paul’s ministry in Rome, and that no person or persecution is hindering him or softening his proclamation in any way. Ironically, although Paul is in captivity and awaiting trial, he is still utterly free and unfettered in his mission, as a missionary-prisoner of the gospel.

This last verse functions as a paradigmatic statement, which summarizes what Luke is rhetorically advocating throughout Acts, much like 1.8. It epitomizes Luke’s ideal wish for his readers, namely that they would also preach the kingdom of God and teach about Jesus Christ with total freedom and bold confidence, just as Paul does. As Marguerat explains:

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<sup>71</sup> ‘The final words “with all boldness and without hindrance,” further typify the appropriate character of Christian witnessing. Throughout Acts, the witnesses to Jesus’ resurrection have spoken “boldly” (4.13,29-31). “Without hindrance” intensifies the description’, Gaventa, *Acts*, 369.



This portrayal of the ideal pastor [28.30-31] points to the men and women, with Luke or close to him, who through their missionary engagement, perpetuate the memory of the apostle to the Gentiles. In this way, they were associated with the witness of the Risen One 'to the ends of the earth' (1.8) – a programme which remains open. *The summary offers an anticipation of it, as it waits to be reconstituted in the life of the reader the moment when he or she finishes the reading of the book.*<sup>72</sup>

It is significant that Acts 28.31 comes in the context of Paul's Roman house arrest; Luke is claiming that effective mission can happen even when persecution is severely limiting a missionary's mobility and freedom. In fact, it is more accurate to say that Luke is advocating that this kind of unhindered evangelism and building up of the church should happen particularly in times of imprisonment, trial, and other kinds of persecution. In many ways, this verse summarizes the final part of Acts: persecution is an unavoidable part of the Christian mission, and regardless of the difficulty a person may encounter, they can still be an effective and unhindered messenger of the gospel. Paul is the ultimate example of such a missionary-prisoner paradigm, and Luke hopes that his readers will emulate him.

### **15.3 Conclusions**

One of the fundamental tenets of Christianity is the suffering of Christ. Similarly, one of the chief characteristics of the early church is its own suffering, as Christians follow in the footsteps of their Lord. This suffering in Luke's Gospel and in Acts provides an important and 'profound link' between Luke's two-volume work.<sup>73</sup> As Peterson explains, 'Readers are encouraged to follow the example of the earliest believers, and Paul in particular, by holding fast to the same gospel and continuing to be active in its dissemination, even in the face of persecution from without and conflict from within the churches.'<sup>74</sup>

It would have been difficult enough for Luke to inspire his readers to mission in pleasant circumstances, but Luke has the arduous task of motivating them in exceedingly challenging times. He knows that the evangelism he is advocating in Acts will happen in a

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<sup>72</sup> Marguerat, *Historian*, 230.

<sup>73</sup> D. Peterson, 'Luke's Theological Enterprise: Integration and Intent', *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, I. H. Marshall, D. Peterson, eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998): 521-44, citing 544.

<sup>74</sup> Peterson, 'Theological Enterprise', 544.

climate of deep and often violent hostility.<sup>75</sup> For this reason, he devotes the final portion of his missional narrative to equipping them in how to respond when they face persecution, particularly in the form of imprisonment and trial. Christians would have been inspired and empowered by Paul's motivating example in the final seven chapters of Acts, as he demonstrates what it means to remain faithful to Christ and boldly committed to the cause, as the ideal missionary-prisoner. In this way, Luke integrates suffering and persecution into an overarching matrix of mission and evangelism, and shows his readers that they are not merely compatible, but inseparable.

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<sup>75</sup> Rapske, 'Opposition', 254.

## CHAPTER 16 – THE ENDING AND PURPOSE OF ACTS

Acts is a book saturated with mission. The coming of the Spirit at Pentecost ignites a missional movement, expressing itself through bold evangelism, sacrificial proclamation, and an ever-expanding core of faithful witnesses. As the narrative unfolds, the momentum of the mission accelerates, and its geographical scope widens. ‘The ends of the earth’ begin to become an actual possibility, as the relentless Word goes from strength to strength, and place to place. The Apostle Paul embodies the apostolic missionary ethos which carries the message and movement forward. Paul is at his finest at Ephesus, operating in the supernatural power of God, and birthing a regional missionary movement that impacts all of Asia. Even when he is imprisoned, on trial, and severely limited, he continues to boldly proclaim the gospel, and exemplify the ideal prisoner-witness. The narrative seems to be moving towards some grand climax, some ultimate culminating encounter, in which the gospel takes on the Empire, and wins.

### *16.1 The Ending of Acts*

The enigmatic conclusion of the Acts narrative disappoints such expectations. Luke has hinted that Paul would appear before Caesar (25.11,12,21; 26.32; 27.24), and so the reader looks forward to this cosmic confrontation, and towards gaining some resolution about the end of Paul’s life and mission. Yet none of this materializes in Acts. Luke does not even describe the outcome of Paul’s impending trial in Rome, much less the grand finale of his vast mission. Instead, Paul is depicted, ‘preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, unhindered’ (28.31). And thus ends this epic missionary narrative.

In fact, it does not really end, it simply quits. On reading these last words, one wishes to turn the page, and discover what becomes of Paul, or at least what happens next. ‘Perhaps,

instead of a final period, the book should end with ellipsis points...'<sup>1</sup> Why the book of Acts does not actually end has been endlessly discussed by scholars.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps Luke was planning a third volume? Perhaps he wrote as Paul was on trial, and did not know the outcome?<sup>3</sup>

From a missional perspective, the explanation for the ending of Acts is actually quite simple: the narrative does not end, because the mission does not end. If the 'Acts of the Apostles' was really about the apostles, Luke would reveal what becomes of them. But Acts is about mission, and Luke is employing an intentional literary strategy by ending, or not ending, Acts the way he does: he is implying that the story continues on, to his present day, and even beyond. He avoids putting a fixed ending point on his narrative, because his conviction is that it is still ongoing.

Luke attempts to draw his readers into participating in the missional story of Acts, by leaving multiple narrative details unresolved and many questions unanswered, and by abruptly departing from an on-going storyline. As Parsons comments,

Chrysostom was one of the first interpreters to recognize the literary implications of the ending of Acts: 'The author [Luke] conducts his narrative up to this point, and leaves the hearer thirsty so that he fills up the lack by himself through reflection' (*Hom. Act. 15*). How would the audience be expected to 'fill up the lack'? By completing the story in accord with what has preceded (cf. Aristotle, *Poet.* 7.21).<sup>4</sup>

Many scholars since Chrysostom have understood the final verses of Acts similarly:

'What response might his [Luke's] original readers well have had when they reached the end of his second volume?...They must have been encouraged to continue in faithful witness to their risen Lord by all that Luke related in his second volume concerning the apostles and Paul...Whatever their time and place, whatever their particular circumstances, how could they not have been inspired to manifest within their own lives the same faithfulness and the same resoluteness which Paul himself had manifested in his own surpassing witness to the risen Jesus, the Lord who had called them all?'<sup>5</sup>

The ending of Acts is truly an opening to the continuing life of the messianic people, as it continues to preach the kingdom and teach the things concerning Jesus both boldly and without hindrance.<sup>6</sup>

The important unfinished business in this situation is for the witness of the new community to press forward. Still to be accomplished in the contemporary life of the church is the divine intention revealed to Paul and Barnabas at Pisidian Antioch midway through the narrative of Acts (13.47): 'I

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<sup>1</sup> González, *Acts*, 280.

<sup>2</sup> For a list of views, and some assessment, see Hemer, *Acts*, 383-87.

<sup>3</sup> On the enigmatic ending of Acts, see Marguerat, *Historian*, 205-30; Pervo, *Acts*, 688-70.

<sup>4</sup> Parsons, *Acts*, 366.

<sup>5</sup> R. J. Cassidy, *Society and Politics in the Acts of the Apostles* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1987): 170.

<sup>6</sup> Johnson, *Acts*, 476.

have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation, to the uttermost parts of the earth'.<sup>7</sup>

Because God is God, hope remains that God's comprehensive saving purpose will somehow be realized, but there is no indication of how that can happen. In the meantime, Acts can only suggest that the church welcome those Jews who are still willing to listen and continue its mission to the more responsive gentile world.<sup>8</sup>

Through a variety of rhetorical strategies, Luke-Acts manoeuvres its readers into alignment with the 'witnesses' (*autoptai* or *martyres*) who constitute the insiders in the story. That is, the Lukan text is designed to persuade the readers to become believing witnesses.<sup>9</sup>

Rosner substantiates this claim by examining the ending of Acts in terms of ancient rhetoric and modern literary theory.<sup>10</sup> He also helpfully cites N. T. Wright's analogy of how biblical narratives carry authority for Christians: if the fifth act of a play of Shakespeare has been lost, expert and experienced Shakespearean actors would be well qualified to re-compose it.<sup>11</sup> As Rosner concludes, 'Acts, to adopt the model, is about the spread of the gospel and it challenges its readers to press ahead with the unfinished task.'<sup>12</sup> It could be said that Luke understands his readers to be living in 'Acts 29', the subsequent episode of his narrative, and the open-ended conclusion of Acts deliberately includes them in the task of continuing the missional spread of the word.

### ***16.2 Luke's Historical Situation – A Hypothetical Reconstruction***

By the time Luke writes Acts, the Christian churches are likely a widespread network extending across the Greek-speaking world, and probably beyond. Luke lives within a specific situation in the life of the church of his day, and is therefore closely linked with at least one particular network of house churches within this larger church structure of the late

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<sup>7</sup> Kee, *Good News*, 107.

<sup>8</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2.357.

<sup>9</sup> Darr, *Character Building*, 53, also 147.

<sup>10</sup> Rosner, 'Progress', 230-32.

<sup>11</sup> N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (London: SPCK, 1992): 1.139-43: 'highly trained, sensitive and experienced Shakespearean actors, who would immerse themselves in the first four acts', 140. See also, 'How Can the Bible Be Authoritative?', *Vox Evangelica* 21 (1991): 7-32.

<sup>12</sup> Rosner, 'Progress', 233.

first century. From this location, Luke is writing to address particular problems, challenges, or dynamics that he is aware of within his own church circles.<sup>13</sup>

Scholars estimate that Paul is a prisoner in Rome around 61-63 CE. He is likely martyred in the next 5 or 6 years, certainly sometime in the decade of the 60s. The majority of scholars date Acts sometime between 70 and 90 CE. This work will suppose that Acts is written around 80-85; though this is not precise, it is generally regarded as accurate.<sup>14</sup> Thus Luke is probably writing Acts 20-25 years after the last events he recounts. This allows for him to have been a travelling companion of Paul at times in his earlier years. It also explains the sense of historical perspective and development that can be observed in Acts, and at the same time Acts' apparent freshness and vivid detail, particularly in the second half. The events of Acts would have been a personal but somewhat distant memory to many of its first readers, and probably to Luke as well.

A first 'generation' of Christians can be spoken of, composed of people such as Peter, James, and John, all of whom had actually known Jesus (in their ministry prime roughly 20-40 CE).<sup>15</sup> Then there is a second generation, epitomized by people such as Paul, Barnabas, Stephen, and Phillip, who had not actually walked with Jesus, but who carry forward his mission (roughly 40-60). In many ways, Acts is the story of the passing of the missional baton from the first to the second generation, from Peter to Paul, and the major exploits of both generations after Christ's resurrection and ascension. However, Luke is writing as a representative of the third Christian generation (roughly 60-80), those most influenced by the second generation.<sup>16</sup> He is writing to his generation, and also to the fourth and fifth

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<sup>13</sup> This corresponds to most scholars' conclusion of, that Acts has a Christian audience as its intended readership, rather than being evangelistic, or addressed to the Roman government, as a political apology. Maddox, *Purpose*, 12-15.

<sup>14</sup> See §2.1.3. The exact dating of Acts is neither central nor essential to the overall arguments of this thesis.

<sup>15</sup> 'Generation' is used here not as a technical term for precise scientific analysis, nor as an age designation, but as an informal measurement for investigation of ministry involvement. 'Generations' in the ancient world were approximately 20 years, as this was the average time-span from a person's birth to the birth of their first child.

<sup>16</sup> As a likely sometimes traveling companion, Luke is clearly influenced most by Paul, the 'greatest' missionary of the second generation. This helps to explain Luke's Pauline focus in Acts 13-28. Luke accentuates 'the

generations behind him (80 and beyond).<sup>17</sup> As he recounts the missionary feats of the first two generations of Christ followers, Luke is attempting to pass on the missional nature of the earliest church to later Christian generations.

Very little is known about the condition of the church in the late first century, when Luke writes Acts and when the third and fourth generations of leaders are in place, other than what can be deduced from later NT documents. There is virtually no external evidence for this period, which leaves scholars to extrapolate based on clues which can be observed within the texts:

Between the death of Paul in the early 60's and the writing of Revelation and 1 Clement in the mid-90's AD we have a *famous dark patch of early Christian history*. Within this period, as most scholars agree, the four gospels and Acts were written, and though none of them describes it, they may nevertheless provide some hints of contemporary events and developments. Luke-Acts, being by far the longest of these works, may well be looked to to provide some such hints.<sup>18</sup>

It is likely that with the death of Peter, Paul, and other influential early Christian leaders, the missionary zeal which they carried and embodied also began to die. Such people surely had an immense impact on the Christian mission, and their loss would have been acutely felt. Their passing may have precipitated a crisis, as the church sought to stave off missional apathy, and continue to grow apart from their leadership. In Luke's day, the vivacious movement of the early church was likely being replaced by an institution, with hierarchical leadership structures replacing the Spirit-led dynamism and missional fluidity which characterized the earliest church.

González summarizes the probable general situation of the church when Luke writes:

The Church, which had begun with a vision of the power of God and with great hope that the advance of its mission would lead to the fulfillment of God's promises, now found itself in a serious conflict both with the Roman Empire and with the surrounding culture and

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transition from "Pauline" to "post-Pauline" times, the shift from the second generation to the third', Pervo, *Acts*, 517; also, Weiser, *Apostel.*, 2.569.

<sup>17</sup> 'Paul's great career lies some time in the past, but not so far back as to prevent Luke from seeing Paul as the bridge between the time of the Apostles and that of the author and his readers', Maddox, *Purpose*, 180.

<sup>18</sup> Maddox, *Purpose*, 3.

civilization...*Christians, who had begun their mission as heralds of a new age, were now in danger of severe discouragement as they clashed with the powers of the old age.*<sup>19</sup>

Luke had probably witnessed the fervent missionary zeal of the early church as a young man travelling with Paul, and the discrepancy between the earliest church and his church, living only 2-3 generations later, would have been blatant. Much of the prophetic and apostolic power which characterized the earlier Pauline missionary movement had perhaps waned, with general discouragement and apathy taking its place. The missionary ambition to carry the gospel 'to the ends of the earth' had very likely faded. Rather than writing a corrective letter of exhortation and rebuke to his church, Luke chooses a different route to addressing this disparity: he writes Acts, a missional history of the earliest church in narrative form.

### ***16.3 The Purpose of Acts***

This work has argued that Luke's primary purpose in writing Acts is not historical, but rhetorical and exhortational. Acts functions as a provocation to the church of Luke's day and beyond, provoking Christians towards mission. It confronts missional apathy directly, by painting a vivid picture of the earliest church, and highlighting the disparities between that church and its readers. By 'ending' as it does, it stresses that the mission that drove the earliest believers is not complete, but is rather ongoing and urgent. Understood this way, Acts is a call to missional action which urges its believing readers to wholeheartedly join with this continuing mission.

Luke's purpose in Acts is to call his church to mission, and to help them discover practical ways of living this mission out. Acts thus functions as a catalyst to mission, and an equipping narrative for mission. Luke does this primarily through the way that he depicts the characters and churches in his narrative. In Acts there is instruction for individual believers, and also for corporate churches. People such as Paul, Peter, Philip, Stephen, Barnabas,

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<sup>19</sup> González, *Acts*, 7. 'Serious conflict' may be somewhat extreme; in Acts, unlike Revelation, we see both tensions with and accommodations to the prevailing culture surrounding the church. The point about 'severe discouragement' at the lack of the fulfillment of the mission is important.



Priscilla, and Aquila are the models individuals are to follow. Churches such as Jerusalem, Antioch, and Ephesus are the communities that congregations in Luke's day are to emulate. Both individually and corporately, characterization is the primary narrative technique that Luke employs. This is essentially the argument of Jervell: 'the Lucan portrayal of early Christianity is not a mere presentation of a bygone era in the history of salvation, but is taken as a binding/compulsory example, which Luke the theologian sets before the eyes of the Christians of his generation.'<sup>20</sup>

There are certainly other levels to Luke's purpose in Acts.<sup>21</sup> He is equipping believers in what to do and how to respond when they are put on trial, or when they face persecution.<sup>22</sup> He is encouraging believers to remain faithful in their allegiance and witness to Christ, no matter what happens to them.<sup>23</sup> In general terms, Luke is attempting to help Christians understand their identity as juxtaposed with Judaism, and specifically why so many Jews have not received Christ.<sup>24</sup> 'It is a work aimed at reassuring the Christian community about the significance of the tradition and faith in which it stands...[Luke] writes to reassure the Christians of his day that their faith in Jesus is no aberration, but the authentic goal towards which God's ancient dealings with Israel were driving.'<sup>25</sup>

Although all of these authorial purposes are undoubtedly true, this work has argued that Luke's primary goal is quite specific: he means to provoke and equip his church to actively engage in the mission of Jesus Christ, which he purposefully portrays as incomplete.

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<sup>20</sup> Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 50-51. This means that Luke's account of the Gentile mission, apostolic preaching, and the conversion of Jews and Gentiles, is meant to have a normative and paraenetic function for Luke's readers.

<sup>21</sup> Fitzmyer provides a useful summary of various scholars' proposals about the purpose(s) of Acts, *Acts*, 55-60. Cf. Bruce, *Acts*, 21-27; Witherington, *Acts*, 68-76; Johnson, *Acts*, 7-9; Haenchen, *Acts*, 90-111.

<sup>22</sup> Maddox, *Purpose*, 80-82. This has been analyzed in the previous chapter. This work understands this is a sub-section of Luke's overall purpose, related to calling the church to and equipping the church for missional action.

<sup>23</sup> Cassidy develops this 'allegiance-witness theory', *Society and Politics*, 158-70.

<sup>24</sup> Pervo considers Acts to be a 'legitimizing narrative', designed 'to explain and defend a body that has existed for some time and whose identity has been challenged rather than, for example, to nurture a young and fragile body grappling to discover its identity', *Acts*, 21-22.

<sup>25</sup> Maddox, *Purpose*, 186.

All other purposes should be understood as secondary sub-aspects of this overriding missional purpose.<sup>26</sup> Haenchen envisages Acts being written to edify the churches and ‘thereby contribute its part in spreading the Word of God farther and farther, even to the ends of the earth.’<sup>27</sup> Luke constructs the Acts narrative rhetorically with this objective in mind, and it is apparent in nearly every narrative episode of Acts.

#### ***16.4 Acts’ Potential Impact on the Church***

It is feasible that Luke at least partially achieved his goal of inspiring his church to mission, and that much of the historical success of the Christian mission, in reaching the Empire and beyond, is partially due to the missional influence of the Acts narrative. Luke essentially takes many of the missional principles of the earliest church, as he understands them, and packages them in a way that they can be grasped and applied by subsequent generations. Nowhere else is there anything like this in early Christianity. Paul surely taught, trained, and modeled mission intentionally in his lifetime, but he never wrote a missional manual for later Christians to follow. Luke did not write an explicit missional manual either, but he means for Acts to function in this way, as a template for later missionary activity. He chooses and presents stories which help Christians understand the way the early church carried out mission, and a missional interpretation of Acts produces many of the concepts and principles discussed in this work.

About 30 years after Luke wrote Acts, in 111/112 CE, Pliny the Younger writes a letter to Emperor Trajan in which he complains about the aggressive expansion of the ‘wretched cult’ (*superstitionem pravam, immodicam*), set off by the crucifixion of Jesus, a superstition that now reaches a ‘a great many individuals of every age and class, both men

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<sup>26</sup> For example, one of the natural consequences of pursuing mission as Luke advocates it is persecution, and so Luke does speak about this in Acts, but only because it is an unavoidable result of his overriding purpose.

<sup>27</sup> E. Haenchen, ‘The Book of Acts as Source Material for the History of Earliest Christianity’, *Studies in Luke-Acts*, 258-78, citing 278.

and women', and infects 'not only the towns, but villages and rural districts too'.<sup>28</sup> This letter captures the boldness and evangelistic fearlessness of many early Christians, and demonstrates how quickly Christianity has taken a significant foothold throughout the Roman Empire. It is feasible that Acts' rhetorical missional content plays a direct role in the missional expansion to which Pliny's letter refers.

At the end of the first century, as Acts is beginning to circulate amongst the churches, Christians represent a miniscule percentage of the overall population of the Empire, probably no more than 0.5 percent, and possibly much less. Yet historians estimate that only 200 years later, around the time of Emperor Constantine, Christianity has grown rapidly to at least 5 million people, which would amount to 8.4 percent of a total population of 60 million.<sup>29</sup>

While there may be multiple contributing factors, the primary underlying cause of Christianity's swift historical growth is undeniable: *mission*.<sup>30</sup> Many Christians in the critical two centuries from 100-300 CE actively spread their faith, doing missionary work.

It cannot be doubted that early Christianity was a missionary movement and that evangelism was practiced. The church could not have spread and grown in the way it did purely spontaneously without the Gospel being deliberately communicated to those who had not yet heard it or not yet responded positively to it. There has been plenty of historical study tracing

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<sup>28</sup> This passage provides multiple fascinating insights into the nature and practice of early Christianity. Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, 10.96.8-10: 'I have asked them in person if they are Christians, and if they admit it, I repeat the question a second and third time...If they persist, I order them to be led away for execution; for...I am convinced that their *stubbornness and unshakeable obstinacy* ought not to go unpunished. There have been others similarly *fanatical* who are Roman citizens...the charges are becoming more widespread and increasing in variety... I considered that I should dismiss any who denied that they were or ever had been Christians when they repeated after me a formula of invocation to the gods and had made offerings of wine and incense to your statue...and furthermore had reviled the name of Christ; none of which things, I understand, any genuine Christian can be induced to do...They also declared that the sum total of their guilt of error amounted to no more than this: *they had met regularly before dawn on a fixed day to chant verses alternately among themselves in honour of Christ as if to a god, and also to bind themselves by oath, not for any criminal purpose, but to abstain from theft, robbery and adultery, to commit no breach of trust and not to deny a deposit when called upon to restore it. After this ceremony it had been their custom to disperse and reassemble later to take food of an ordinary, harmless kind...*This made me decide it was all the more necessary to extract the truth by torture from two slave-women, whom they call deaconesses. I found nothing but a degenerate sort of cult carried to extravagant lengths...The question seems to me to be worthy of your consideration, especially in view of the number of persons endangered; for *a great many individuals of every age and class, both men and women, are being brought to trial, and this is likely to continue. It is not only the towns, but villages and rural districts too which are infected through contact with this wretched cult...*'

<sup>29</sup> MacMullen, *Christianizing*, 32, cf. 135-36 for details of his numbers. More recently, Stark, *Rise of Christianity*, 6-7, estimates 6.3 million Christians, which would be about 10.5 percent of the Empire; cf. 4-13 for Stark's 'Arithmetic of Growth' in the early church.

<sup>30</sup> This is not to deny other possible social, theological, and historical causes. But these often have a missional dimension as well, and are secondary to the intentional missionary activity of the early church.

the growth of the church, and equally there has been plenty of theological study, emphasizing the essential missionary character of early Christianity and the way in which the Gospel for all people, both Jews and Gentiles, forms the core of the Christian message.<sup>31</sup>

The early church was a missionary church, and nearly all of their activities possessed a missional dimension. 'For the early Church it was a matter of course that the gospel had to be proclaimed, and that therefore mission was a necessity. The Church was, in the initial period, a missionary Church in the best sense; it lived through the mission and for the mission...the good news was simply carried farther and farther, spreading like wildfire and forming churches which were at first small and then grew rapidly.'<sup>32</sup> Such focused and intentional missional outreach is the primary way to explain the Christian church's dramatic numerical expansion over the first three centuries of the Roman Empire.<sup>33</sup> Unsurprisingly, this type of deliberate evangelistic activity is more transparently evident in the book of Acts than in any other book in the NT.

Luke's goal in writing Acts was likely at least partially accomplished: Christians who read it were inspired to carry on the mission begun by the earliest believers, even when this involved personal sacrifice on their part. Though it is impossible to be certain, Acts' influence is likely one of the primary factors which contributed to the historical missional advance of the church, and the eventual triumph of Christianity over its religious competitors in the Roman Empire. Acts' subsequent inclusion in the NT canon surely only broadened its readership and popularity, and expanded its influence on the churches who read it, and who were inspired and equipped by its missional content. In this regard, it is entirely plausible that Luke's rhetorical ambitions were achieved in some measure, and that the text of Acts actually functioned as a missional call to action in the first centuries of the Christian church.

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<sup>31</sup> I. H. Marshall, 'Who Were the Evangelists?', *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles*, J. Adna, H. Kvalbein, eds. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 2000): 251-63, citing 252.

<sup>32</sup> Hahn, *Mission*, 16.

<sup>33</sup> Although cf. Stark, *Rise of Christianity*, who does not discount evangelism and outreach, but argues that social factors are also a primary cause. Cf. also, J. T. Sanders, *Charisma, Converts, Competitors*. We need not draw too clear a line between various factors, as social factors can also be missional (e.g., the use of social networks, *ὄλιγο* evangelism, rational choice theory, etc.). There is a significant textual witness to this in Acts.

All of this is admittedly hypothetical. It is impossible to be certain about the circumstances in which Acts was written, just as scholars will never know the details of Acts' early impact on the church. But what is clear is that Luke beckons, and even compels, the reader of Acts to enter into and engage with this missional story. As Gaventa explains:

*The sense that the story is not finished summons readers to supply the ending themselves...Luke has strongly hinted at Paul's death (e.g., 10.22-24,25,38), so that 'gap' fills itself from the narrative. The gap that remains is how readers will respond, and whether they also will join the witness to God's salvation in the person of Jesus Christ. Paul's witness in captivity is 'unhindered,' [Acts 28.31] and the gospel will continue to be 'unhindered' as well.<sup>34</sup>*

## **PART 5 CONCLUSION – EQUIPPING MISSIONARIES TO RESPOND TO SUFFERING AND PERSECUTION**

If Acts' readers decide to take Luke's missional exhortations seriously, it is very likely that they will face some degree of opposition, whether that is physical suffering, imprisonment, trial, or even martyrdom. Luke realizes that if his goal is to motivate and equip his readers to engage in Christian mission, they will require some practical instruction about how to respond to persecution and suffering when it comes their way. Luke presents the persecution accounts in his narrative with this purpose in mind.

The theme of missional suffering is interwoven throughout Acts, from the first Sanhedrin trial narratives, through Stephen's martyrdom, the Jerusalem scattering, and Paul's Philippian incarceration. However, it is most clear in Paul's trial narratives (Acts 22-28). Luke advocates that trials and imprisonment are ideal platforms for missional proclamation, and that the Christian sufferer should boldly and continually preach the gospel. Additionally, they should defend themselves vigorously in court, and emphasize their personal testimonies. Above all, they should realize God's sovereignty in their suffering, and trust that he will intervene on their behalf. Acts' abrupt ending is an invitation to join the mission, even when this involves pain.

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<sup>34</sup> Gaventa, *Acts*, 370.

## PART 6 – CONCLUSIONS

*'I have placed you as a light for the Gentiles,  
That you may bring salvation to the end of the earth.'*  
-Acts 13.47 [Isa 49.6] (NASB)

### CHAPTER 17 – SUMMARY AND REFLECTION

#### *17.1 Introductory Chapters*

Part one of this research examined the concept of mission in Acts (§1.1) and biblical scholarship (§1.2), and proposed some reasons why biblical scholars often overlook it (§1.3). It also summarized selected background scholarship on Acts (§2.1), and identified this work's methodological (§2.2) and hermeneutical approaches to Acts (§2.3).

The hermeneutical keys identified in §2.3 have helped to differentiate between what is merely descriptive in Acts, and what is prescriptive. This work has particularly focused on themes emerging in the form of narrative redundancy, linguistic repetition, and consistently repeated patterns, to discern what Luke is rhetorically advocating in Acts.<sup>1</sup> Throughout Acts, there is clear divine approval towards the Christian mission, and clear divine disapproval towards those who oppose or persecute Christian missionaries, indicating that this is normative for Luke. Perhaps chiefly, Luke uses characterization in a paraenetic sense, to persuade his readers about a certain missional course of action.<sup>2</sup> All of this takes place within the normative behavior revealed in the Jerusalem church summaries, and the normative belief expressed through the Petrine and Pauline speeches in Acts.

Finally, chapter three defined mission and its related words and concepts (§3.1), and undertook an examination of mission in Acts, expressed in both linguistic and narrative terms (§3.2), concluding that Acts is truly a missional narrative (§3.3). This established the

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<sup>1</sup> E.g., the missional words in ch. 3, such as *εὐαγγελίζομαι, μάρτυς, καταγγέλλω, διδάσκω* and *κηρύσσω*; and the various missional concepts in parts 2-4, such as *πνεῦμα, λόγος, οἶκος, ἐκκλησία*, and *σημεῖον*.

<sup>2</sup> Paul in Acts is, of course, the ultimate example of Lukan characterization; nearly everything about his life and ministry is meant to be learned from and imitated by Luke's readers. But other prominent characters (and churches) also have similar roles within the Acts narrative.

foundation for the body of this work, divided into three overlapping categories: missional stimulus, missional structure, and missional strategy in Acts.

### *17.2 Missional Stimulus*

The second part investigated what stimulated believers to engage with mission, in terms of their motivation (why they did it), and what empowered them to live missional lives (their power source). This examination resulted in four primary stimuli, each of which is a catalyst for missional advancement in Acts, and an example to be emulated by Luke's readers.

Luke presents the *λόγος* as the first and primary missional theme of Acts, and the main source of active missional advancement (§4.1). The *λόγος* in Acts combines Luke's Christological, ecclesiological, and missional convictions, and encapsulates the unfolding progression of the early Christian mission (§4.2). It advances actively throughout Acts, and Luke is implicitly inviting his readers to join in this missional movement.

Luke's conception of the *λόγος* emphasizes that the leadership of the mission rests in God's hand, and not in man's. For Luke, the progress of the Word is ultimately God's responsibility. Followers of Christ join in with him in the mission, but as the divine *λόγος* he is already doing it, and he will carry it to completion. Additionally, the unstoppable nature of the Word's advance inspires the church with great confidence in joining the mission: though there may be setbacks and suffering along the way, Christ's ultimate victory is assured (§4.3). The sovereign leadership of God is foundational to Luke's missional theology.

In Acts the *πνεῦμα* carries this evangelistic movement forward, as both the primary missionary, and the primary power-source for the mission. Lukan missional outreach is initiated, sustained, directed and concluded by the Spirit, who as a character in the Acts narrative is also the ultimate prophetic missional mouth-piece (§5.3). The *πνεῦμα* builds the church, and builds up the church, through protecting its unity, and transforming the personal characters of its members. Luke is not asking his readers to do something for

which they have no empowerment. Instead, he is inviting believers to live in and draw from the power of the Spirit in their personal lives, and to join in with the missional journey of the πνεῦμα throughout the earth (§5.4).

The church of Acts has a *universally inclusive theological outlook*, in which the message of the εὐαγγέλιον is for everyone, regardless of location (§6.1), ethnicity (§6.2), or social class (§6.3), and holistically addresses every part of a person's life (§6.4). This becomes a motivator and source of evangelistic urgency in itself – if the message is for all people, it must be carried and proclaimed to them. According to Acts, Christian mission requires a universally inclusive theology: the gospel's relevance to every person, everywhere, is a primary missional motivator (§6.5). This implies that for Luke when the gospel loses its absolute claims to truth and relevance, the efficacy of the mission becomes severely limited.

Acts challenges its reader to cultivate a missional theology, in which they are led by the Word, empowered by the Spirit, and hold the gospel as universally relevant. Luke also invites his readers to develop a missional lifestyle. The *radical lifestyles* of the earliest Christians, characterized by a rigorously high standard of discipleship (§7.1), an apostolic culture or ethos (§7.2), and an enthusiastic and disciplined personal devotion to Christ (§7.3), are central to their missional success throughout the Acts narrative.

In Acts Christians believe so deeply in the importance of the mission that pain, suffering, and even martyrdom on behalf of its advancement are reasonable sacrifices (§7.2.1). Similarly, the early missionaries are characterized by a pioneering spirit throughout Acts, determined to go to new and different places, where the gospel has not yet been proclaimed (§7.2.2). Missionaries in Acts consistently rely on miracles and the supernatural to confirm and validate their evangelistic message (§7.2.3). And they are continually preaching the Gospel and engaging in evangelistic activities, which often take the form of convincing apologetic rhetoric (§7.2.4). Acts portrays a church which lives in spiritual



power, and grows largely because people experience this reality in their personal lives, and are infused with evangelistic faith and boldness as a result (§7.2.5).

Luke invites his church to intentionally cultivate all of these missional characteristics, along with a high standard of Christian discipleship and obedience, and a consistent practice of the personal disciplines of prayer (§7.3.1), fasting (§7.3.2), and worship (§7.3.3). In Acts, these spiritual disciplines allow the inner life of the missionary to remain healthy, and effective mission flows directly from and is sustained by this personal devotion (§7.3.4). Luke depicts many of the characters in Acts as role-models who embody the above missional characteristics, and from which Christians can find inspiration and motivation. He also presents the primary churches in his narrative, such as Jerusalem, Syrian Antioch, and Ephesus, as models for his contemporary local churches to emulate.

Luke is convinced that a vision and theology based on the unrelenting advance of the λόγος, the inevitable power of the πνεῦμα, and the universal relevance of the εὐαγγέλιον must be at the heart of Christian mission. Additionally, a high standard of Christian discipleship, a willingness to suffer for the cause, a pioneering spirit, and an enthusiastic devotion to God are essential ingredients in missionary activity in Acts. All of this is a rhetorical call to his readers to engage in evangelistic action, and join the missional Jesus movement.

### ***17.3 Missional Structure***

Christians hold the ἐκκλησία as the highest priority in Acts, in terms of the way that they structure and organize themselves. Evangelism consistently emerges out of the ἐκκλησία, and results in the establishment and growth of new ἐκκλησίαι (§8). Luke uses the ἐκκλησία concept to establish a distinctively Christian identity, and to develop an understanding of what the missional church should look like for his readers.

In an οἶκος society, these gathered groups of believers develop most naturally within the established physical and social structures of the οἶκος, and so the church in Acts

takes shape within the houses and households of the ancient world (§9). The *οἶκος* in Acts is consistently the target for initial house-based missional outreach in a particular location, and the launching point for further city-wide and regional evangelism in an area. This creates a missional cycle of outreach, establishing, consolidation, and further outreach in Acts, all based around the *οἶκος* structure.

The *ἐκκλησία* and the *οἶκος* are the primary structural vehicles for Christian mission and proclamation in Acts, and they combine to form the *ἐκκλησία κατ' οἶκον* (§10).<sup>3</sup> Jesus introduces the house church model in embryonic form in his teaching and village and regional ministry (§10.1.2), the earliest Jerusalem church develops it in its city-wide outreach (§10.2), those who are scattered from Jerusalem by persecution adapt it in their urban and regional outreach, particularly at Antioch (§10.3), and Paul employs it in his center-oriented missional outreach (§10.4). Luke stresses throughout Acts that the spread of the church as a relational network of house church communities is God's desire, and one of the primary reasons for the success of the Christian mission. Robinson and Wall emphasize this point:

The consistent witness of Scripture...is that God's intention is to form a people, a community, a visible body...the nature and life of the community of faith is the focus... the concern of Scripture is not the spiritual state of individuals, their holiness, or even their salvation. The focus is God's *ekklesia*, God's community taking form in the world.<sup>4</sup>

This focus on 'we' rather than 'me', is a central theme of Acts, for it pictures the Christian faith as a life lived in community, a community out of which mission naturally flows. Acts depicts a network of house churches, sharing their possessions and goods, and living in *κοινωνία* together in ways that are both formative and transformative to those around them. This church reproduces itself in the form of other local churches, which develop wherever the mission spreads. For Luke, Christ-followers must be gathered together into communities of faith and mission. This requires a church-planting model, which allows for

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<sup>3</sup> For a thorough evaluation of the strengths, weakness, and questions posed by the house church model, see Gehring, *House*, 302-11.

<sup>4</sup> Robinson & Wall, *Called to Be Church*, 3.

the establishing of new congregations as the mission grows. Acts compellingly beckons its readers to discover the transforming power and priority of the *ἐκκλησία κατ' οἶκον*.

#### ***17.4 Missional Strategy***

Throughout the Acts narrative, and particularly in the Pauline mission, Luke is instructing the church of his day how to go about mission in a strategic and effective manner. Part three focused on the missional strategies which Luke advocates in Paul's first (§11), second (§12), and third missionary journeys (§13). This comprehensive missional teaching includes instruction about initial planning and direction, how to approach a new city or area, how to build strategic foundations for the emerging mission, how to develop early cells into reproducing city-wide and regional missional movements, and even hints at personal strategies for sustainable long-term missional success (§14).<sup>5</sup> These missional strategies culminate in rapidly reproducing regional church-planting movements, as epitomized by the way that Paul's ministry at Ephesus has a direct impact on the entire province of Asia.

The details of mission in Acts are not rhetorically innocent, but are meant to be understood and interpreted as the missionary stimuli, structures, and strategies which undergird the rapid expansion of the early church throughout the Empire. This is not to say that Acts is a straightforward 'how-to-guide', with easy answers for church growth and mission. It is a complex narrative, which must be carefully interpreted. However, its story contains much accessible missional instruction, presented in vivid stories of 'real' people, doing 'real' things, on behalf of Christ and his unfolding mission. Luke is advocating that his readers follow the missional examples and themes he has crafted in the Acts narrative.

#### ***17.5 Missional Suffering and Purpose***

Part five of this work dealt with the final seven chapters of Acts, and its enigmatic ending. It traced the missional themes previously identified through the very end of the narrative, and

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<sup>5</sup> See table 14.1 for a comprehensive summary of these missional strategies, and where they are found in Acts.

concluded that through the final verse, Paul is Luke's archetypal missionary-prisoner, perhaps particularly when he is persecuted and on trial (§15). Luke constructs the final scenes of Acts rhetorically, with the purpose of equipping his readers for how to respond when they find themselves in similarly difficult circumstances.

The previous chapter proposed that motivating and equipping Christians for mission is the chief purpose of the book of Acts (§16). This has been seen repeatedly throughout the exegesis and analysis of the text in parts 2-5, but is perhaps most visible in the abrupt ending of Acts. Finally, a hypothetical proposal about Acts' historical situation and impact on the church was suggested. It is possible that Luke's rhetorical aims were at least partially fulfilled in the decades and centuries following the writing of Acts.

### ***17.6 Avenues for Further Study***

This study has proposed that mission is the basic framework through which Acts should be understood and interpreted. It has attempted to accomplish a missional reading of Acts, identifying the key themes and narrative details which Luke emphasizes in the narrative. Each of these details could and should be expanded upon in much greater depth than has been possible here. Additionally, there are a few areas of particular interest for further research.

It is imperative to examine how the missional content of Acts compares to that of other NT documents. Are Luke's missional concepts carried out in the gospels, in the epistles, in the apocalyptic literature? What other concepts could the remainder of the NT contribute to this discussion? This investigation would uncover areas of both convergence and divergence, and it would be fascinating to discuss potential reasons for the differences.<sup>6</sup>

Another area for further research is the reception history of Acts. How have Christians throughout church history understood Acts? Have they interpreted the book as instruction for missionary activity? Have they attempted to apply it to their own context, or

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<sup>6</sup> E.g., the Pauline letters, both authentic and disputed, are largely lacking in direct missional instruction and exhortation, even though he is writing to recently founded churches, and these letters would have represented an ideal opportunity to further expand the mission. This is a clear contrast with Acts.

merely seen it as a history of the earliest church? There is currently no research on the reception history of Acts which focuses on these missional and hermeneutical questions.<sup>7</sup>

Another area is the continuity and discontinuity between the ancient Roman world and the modern world. The contemporary world has changed dramatically in the last century, and as post-modernism and the death of Christendom emerge in the Western world, it seems that there are many intriguing ways in which Acts, and much of the rest of the NT, has gained increasing relevance to the life and mission of the church today.<sup>8</sup>

The contemporary application of many of the missional themes which this study has identified is another obvious area for further research.<sup>9</sup> This would require a significant treatment of mission history, current missiological theory, and sociological study, all of which have not been possible within the limited confines of this work. However, there is much work to be done on contemporary missiological trends, and how they compare to the missional content of Acts. How is the church applying the missional practices of Acts today? There are a multitude of fascinating current examples.<sup>10</sup> Thorough sociological case studies of many of these would provide a concrete, contemporary context for much of the missional theory of Acts.

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<sup>7</sup> The most significant work on the early reception history of Acts is Gregory, *Reception of Luke and Acts*. Cf. also, J.-M. Sevrin, ed., *The New Testament in Early Christianity* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1989), which contains much about reception history of the NT, but very little about Acts, other than an examination of the *Letter of Peter to Philip*, and some of its allusions to the first chapters of Acts, p. 370. Barrett also has a useful section summarizing the early reception history of Acts, *Acts*, 2.lxiii-lxxxii; similarly, Schneider, *Apostel.*, has a full set of early references to Acts (1.169-76), and a concise review of reception of Acts up to the Enlightenment (1.176-82). There is nothing which focuses on mission in Acts throughout church history.

<sup>8</sup> One significant work is Robinson & Wall, *Called to Be Church*.

<sup>9</sup> A useful starting point is R. L. Gallagher, P. Hertig, eds., *Mission in Acts: Ancient Narratives in Contemporary Context* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2004); particularly, E. Gibbs, 'The Launching of Mission: The Outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, Acts 2.1-41': 18-28; N. T. Thomas, 'The Church at Antioch: Crossing Racial, Cultural, and Class Barriers, Acts 11.19-30; 13.1-3': 144-56; R. S. Greenway, 'Success in the City: Paul's Urban Mission Strategy, Acts 14.1-28': 183-95; R. C. Linthicum, 'The Contextualization and Translation of Christianity, Acts 9.1-9; 22.3-33; 26.2-23': 283-96.

<sup>10</sup> E.g., D. J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 6th ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993); R. Winter, S. Hawthorne, eds., *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1999); D. Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World* (Midlothian: WIGTake Resources, 2004); M. Pocock, G. Van Rheenen, D. McConnel, *The Changing Face of World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005); A. Neely, *Christian Mission: A Case Study Approach* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997); W. Taylor, ed., *Global Missiology for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Iguassu Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000).

Finally, there are other individual missional themes in Acts which are still relatively unexplored. For example, what role do angels play in the church's unfolding mission,<sup>11</sup> or visions,<sup>12</sup> or trances?<sup>13</sup> There are many other similarly prominent missional themes in Acts.

### ***17.7 Concluding Thoughts***

This work has suggested that mission is the primary theme of Acts, and therefore that it is the principal frame of reference for any analysis or interpretation of Acts. Such a missional hermeneutical framework illuminates many aspects of the story of Acts, and helps readers to comprehend Luke's original intentions in writing this narrative work of art. Understood in this light, Acts is more than a story, and more than a history – it is a motivational first century guide to Christian mission. It is essential that interpreters of Acts bear this in mind as they attempt to understand the message that it contains.

Acts invites followers of Christ to discover (or rediscover) the missional stimuli, structures, strategies, and even the missional suffering of the earliest church, and to apply them to their own unique situations in relevant and innovative ways. It beckons the church of its day to revisit the transforming experience of the primitive Christian mission. And above all else, it urges its readers to participate in that mission, and to share in the fulfillment of the programmatic Christological promise which overshadows its entire narrative:

*'But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you;  
and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria,  
and even to the ends of the earth.'*

-Acts 1.8

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<sup>11</sup> \*ἄγγελος: Acts 5.19; 6.15; 7.53; 8.26; 10.3,7,22; 11.13; 12.7,8,9,10,11,15,23; 23.9; 27.23.

<sup>12</sup> \*ὄραμα: Acts 9.10,12; 10.3,17,19; 11.5; 12.9; 16.9,10; 18.9.

<sup>13</sup> \*ἔκστασις: Acts 3.10; 10.10; 11.5; 22.17.

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