

THE ART OF BEING

UNORDINARY



HOW GOD CALLS US TO BREAK THE MOLD
STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS



Understanding the Context of Acts



Context

- **Acts best understood as the sequel to Gospel of Luke**
 - **Evident from comparing the opening of both books.**

Context

- The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, **Acts 1:1**

Context

- **1 Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, 2 Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; 3 It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, **Luke 1.1-3****

Context

- **Relationship between Acts & Luke**
 - **Acts does not have any indication the work is written by Luke.**
 - **Acts differs from Paul's letters**
 - **Paul's authorship is indicated within the text itself.**

Context

- **Acts does not follow directly behind the Gospel of Luke**
 - **This is what you would expect of a sequel.**
 - **This is also what we see of other books in the Bible**
 - **1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles**
 - **1 & 2 Corinthians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy**
- **Separation from Luke can lessen the impact of reading these books in relationship to one another.**

Context for Book of Acts

- **When was the book of acts written?**
 - **Scholars are divided on the answer**
 - **Early mid 60's AD**
 - **Late dating 100-130 AD**
 - **Intermediate dating 80-85 AD**

Context for Book of Acts

- **Why is this important?**
 - Gives us some sense of what was happening when the book was written and
 - A sense of what events the author (and the audience) might be responding to.
 - Particularly given that the Book of Acts spends a great deal of time addressing historical events.

Purpose of Acts

- **What is the purpose of this writing?**
 - **Luke the only gospel writer to compose a sequel.**
 - **Traditional ending of Mark focuses on the discovery of the empty tomb.**
 - **Matthew and John append to this ending the discovery events.**
 - **They recount Jesus' appearance of Jesus with the women and other disciples. (Matthew 28.9-20 & John 20.11-21.23)**

Purpose of Acts

- Luke's ending is different
 - Includes the appearance of the risen Christ **Luke 24.13-49**
- Only in Luke does he commission the disciples as witnesses instructing them:
 - 48 And ye are **witnesses** of these things. 49 And, behold, **I send the promise of my Father upon you:** but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. **Luke 24.48-49**

Purpose of Acts

- **I send the promise of my Father upon you..**
- Remains a mystery at the end of Luke.
- Made clear at the beginning of Acts
- 4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but **wait for the promise of the Father,** which, saith he, ye have heard of me. 5 For John truly baptized with water; **but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost** not many days hence. **Acts 1:4-5**

Purpose of Acts

- **Activity of the Holy Spirit**
 - Empowering the testimony of commissioned disciples
 - Major theme of the books of Acts.
- **Ability to carry out this mission**
 - Not the result of any personal competence or capability.
 - Not the result of training or experience.
 - Empowered by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Purpose of Acts

- **If Gospel of Luke considered a prequel to Acts**
 - **Acts should be read as a continuation of that story.**
 - **Not in the sense that it relates to what Jesus continues to do,**
 - **But that it relates to what Jesus' followers, commissioned by Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit, continue to do.**

Purpose of Acts

- There is a parallelism in the books of Luke and Acts
 - A similarity to the things depicted in both books.
 - Designed to prompt some comparison
 - For the purpose of explaining what is being described
- **Parallelism**
 - Fate of Stephen parallels that of Jesus
 - Mission of Paul parallels that of Peter
 - Speeches of Stephen, Peter, and Paul parallel one another.

Purpose of Acts

- **Parallelism**
 - **Contributes to the overall message of the work.**
 - **Gospel of Luke tells the story of Jesus**
 - **Book of Acts proclaims Jesus' story and its salvific intent.**

Purpose of Acts

- Acts gives us a view of the rapid spread of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus' followers.
- Jesus, whose Messiahship is questioned in Luke
- Now broadly proclaimed as Lord and Messiah
 - By those who followed but did not understand in Luke.
 - Spread to the ends of the world.

Purpose of Acts

- Acts records the community of disciples that emerges.
 - They are eventually called Christian (11.26)
 - Also first referred to as the church (5.11; 8.1, 3; 9.31; 20.28)
- Depicts their emergence under pressure.
 - Demonstrates that their faith, their understanding of the gospel, and their practices emerge under pressure.

Purpose of Acts

- Luke presents the work of Luke-Acts as a continuation of Biblical history.
- **13 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus;** whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go...**15 And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead;** whereof we are witnesses.
Acts 3:13, 15

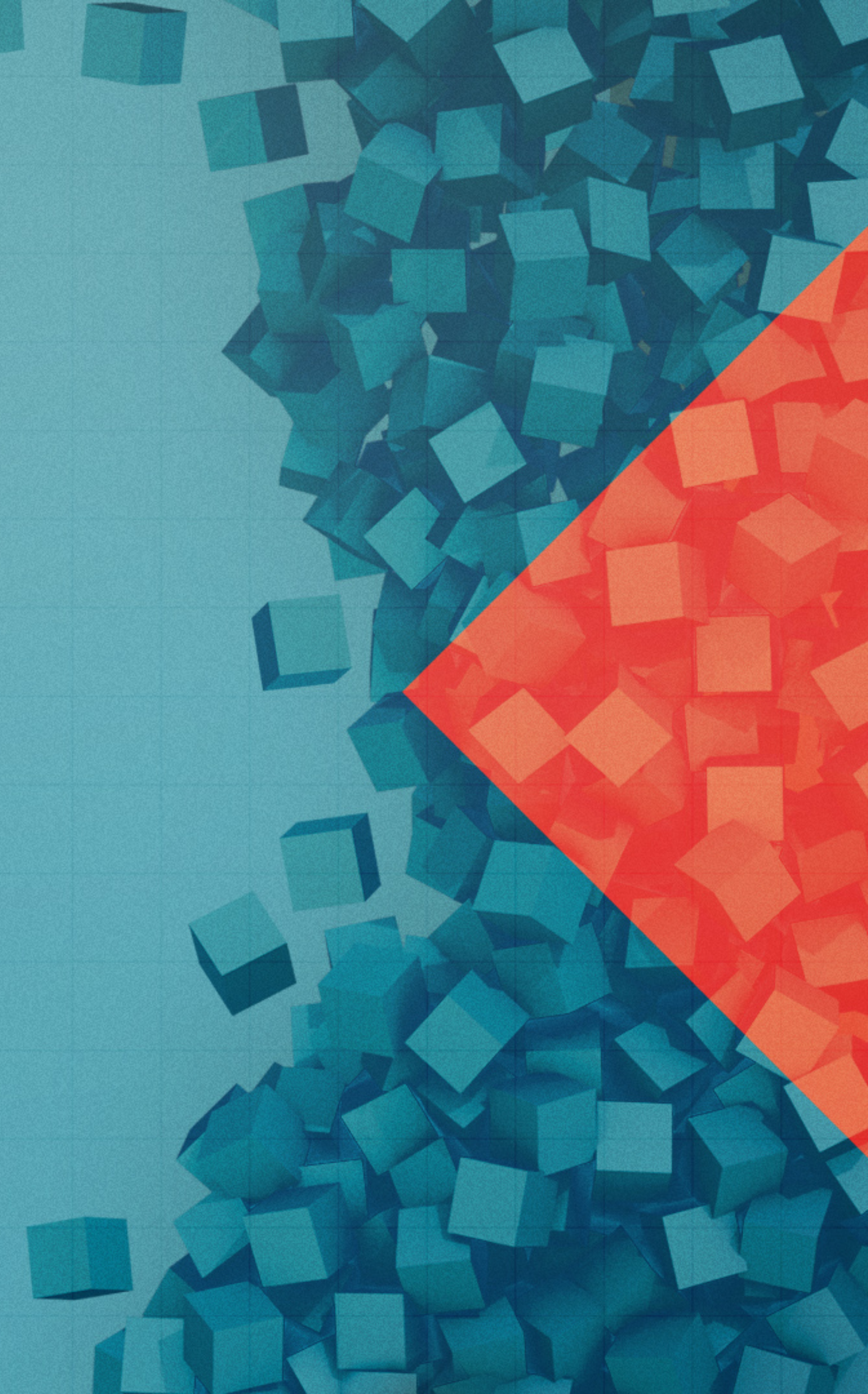
Purpose of Acts

- **Connects Peter and Paul as transmitters of this message to the Jews and Gentiles.**
- **Luke begins the account of the Jesus tradition**
 - **Intimately linked to the biblical history of Israel**
- **Acts presents this story as only stream of the apostolic tradition, represented by Peter and Paul, in which one finds a divinely ordained salvation.**

Purpose of Acts

- **The Jesus story points to the beginning of the still expanding church.**
 - **The church is a continuation, not a substitution, of the Jewish.**
 - **Christian story deeply connected to the Jewish story.**
 - **This is evident in Luke's use of the Hebrew Scriptures to interpret the Christ event.**

Outline of Acts



Outline of Major Sections of Acts

- **The Early Church Community (1.1-26)**
- **The Mission of Testimony in Jerusalem (2.1-8.4)**
- **The Mission of Testimony in Judea and Samaria (8.4-40)**
- **The Word Carried to the Gentiles (9.1-14.28)**
- **The Jerusalem Decision about the Gentile Christians (15.1-35)**
- **Paul's Universal Mission and Testimony (15.36-22.21)**
- **Paul's imprisonment for the Gospel (22.22-28.31)**