

Acts: Luke's Purpose

The Question of Purpose

- In order to understand the original meaning of Acts, we have to ask what Luke's intended purpose was
 - The heart of good exegesis

1. The Movement of the Gospel

- Luke's interest seems to be in the Spirit-guided movement of the Gospel:
 - From Jerusalem-based, Jewish-oriented
 - To Worldwide, Gentile-predominant
- Thus once the primary advocate of Gentile conversion (Paul) arrives at the capital of the Gentile world (Rome), Luke's work concludes
- Thus any statement of purpose that does not include the Gentile mission and the Holy Spirit's role misses the point of Acts

2. Luke's Omissions

What Luke leaves out of his work also speaks to his purpose

- He is NOT telling the biographies of the Apostles
- He is NOT very interested in church organization or polity
- He is NOT telling about every geographic expansion of the Church
 - But rather focuses on the movement from Jerusalem to Rome
 - Thus, we can surmise that Luke's purpose is NOT in an exhaustive record of early Church history

3. NOT Standardization

- He records events as they happened, even when the order or form is inconsistent
 - Ex. The giving of the Spirit and Water Baptism; Communal life among the Jews vs. Gentiles
- Thus we can surmise that Luke's intent is NOT to set a model of Christian experience or Church life
 - NOT Historical Precedent

4. *But Acts is a Model*

- Despite the fact that Luke's purpose in Acts is not to serve as a model for specific behavior
- It does serve as a model in a greater sense
- It is a model of the fact that the life-changing work of the Gospel is the work of the Holy Spirit
 - A truth which ought to be repeated for the Church throughout all times and in all places
- "And precisely because this is God's intent for the church, nothing can hinder it, neither Sanhedrin nor synagogue, dissension nor narrow-mindedness, prison nor plot." p. 119
- Thus, Luke's purpose in Acts includes an intention for the ongoing church to be 'like' the early church
 - By proclaiming the Gospel to the entire world
 - Not by necessarily modeling any of its specific examples