

Introduction to the New Testament History and Literature

Lecture 10: The Acts of the Apostles

Transcript

<https://oyc.yale.edu/religious-studies/rfst-152/lecture-10>

Overview

The speech that Stephen gives before his accusers in Acts shows how the author of Luke-Acts used and edited his sources. So, also, does the description of the destruction of Jerusalem in Luke, as compared to that in Mark. The major themes of Luke-Acts are 1) the Gospel going first to the Jews and then to gentiles and 2) that of the prophet-martyr, with Jesus as the prophet-martyr par excellence.

1. *Stephen's Speech in the Acts of the Apostles*

[1] *Professor Dale Martin:* The chronological and geographical structure of Luke-Acts is thematic and theological, not historical. That's what we talked about last time. How you can actually see the author of Luke-Acts taking sources that he took before him, perhaps some oral sources, I've argued that some of these were even written sources, because it seems like you can actually see where he takes something that was in a written account of the spread of Christianity, slices it at one place, separates that, and puts several chapters in Acts between them. It's very clear from the ten chapters in the Gospel of Luke, which we call the journey to Jerusalem section, that this is an artificial construction on the author's part because, he tells us at one point, at this point Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem. And then he's taken material that he's found in the Gospel of Mark in different places, some parables here, some stories here, some teachings here, he's taken other things that he probably found in Q, in different places, although because remember we don't possess an actual written document of Q, it's a hypothetical document, but we figure that if he did this with Mark, whose document we do possess and therefore can see how he changes the order of material he presents from Mark, he probably did the same thing with Q also. We can see that he's taken things from different sources that he had and put them into this ten chapter long journey to Jerusalem.

[2] Luke and Acts looks like a historical document and this is what fools people. Do you remember back earlier in the beginning of the semester where we compared the first two chapters of Paul's letter to the Galatians with the way Paul is presented as being in and out of Jerusalem, and how many times he went to Jerusalem, what happened in Jerusalem, what happened in Damascus, and I asked you to compare those two accounts. Some of you thought, well I believe the Acts account because Paul clearly has an ax to grind in Galatians, he's clearly trying to make a point of his independence from the Jerusalem church. The book of Acts just looks more like a history; it looks more like a historical account. Well by now you know that, yes, even though it looks like a historical account, especially by ancient historiographical standards, it's not a historical account in anything like the modern sense. One of the most important things to realize, these texts you're reading are creative texts, they're put together for purposes, not one of them is coming to you without some kind of ax to grind, without some kind of tendency, without some kind of theological or ethical or political statement to make. I would go further, well I just think I'm an honest realist, some people might call me a cynic, and say that we need to be careful about all texts we read and not take any text that we read as not having some kind of slant, some kind of interest, some kind of ideological message. That's important to read about all texts in my view.

[3] The last time I made this point by pointing out how that we can see some seams in Luke's narrative, where he ripped apart the source he used to splice something between Acts 8:4 and Acts 11:19. Now I want you to look with me at another passage in Acts, we're going to do the same sort of thing with Acts 6 and 7. Get your Bibles out. This is the story of Stephen. We've talked about Stephen several times already, he's supposedly the first Christian martyr. He was one of the Greek speaking Hellenistic Jews who's in Jerusalem at the time after Jesus' death and resurrection, and he is chosen as one of the twelve [correction: seven] deacons to minister to the widows and to do other kinds of ministerial work, probably because the church was made up partly of Aramaic-Hebrew speaking Jews and partly of Greek speaking Jews. Stephen seems to have been one of those who was chosen to kind of take care of the Greek speaking Jewish members of this small little community. Now you have to remember we're talking about a very early period in the history of Christianity. It's not even Christianity yet. This is just a bunch of Jews who believe Jesus is the Messiah; they were shocked and horrified when Jesus was crucified because the Messiah was not supposed to be crucified. There was no Jewish expectation that the Messiah would be a suffering Messiah in the ancient Jewish world. That's something that followers of Jesus had to invent once they were shocked at the fact that he was actually crucified. The idea was the Messiah wouldn't be crucified and wouldn't suffer, the Messiah would bring an army and overthrow the Romans. So the fact that they believed he was the Messiah and then he's executed, that just came as a huge shock to these early disciples of Jesus. They basically had to invent a new concept of what the Jewish Messiah was.

[4] This was a very small group of people, huddled in Jerusalem, maybe some of them were in Galilee, maybe in Syria, maybe a few other places but according to Acts they're all in Jerusalem at this time. This small group of people are trying to figure out who Jesus was and what that means for the history of Jerusalem. Stephen is one of these people and he's accused of several things. Look at 6:11, 6:11 in Acts, "They secretly instigated some men—" that is, they that the Jewish opponents

of this Jesus group, they had become offended with Stephen and his arguments.

They secretly instigated some men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God."

[5] They're accusing him of blasphemy against Moses and God. What would this kind of blasphemy against Moses and God mean? Well we're going to pick up a few details. Look at 13:

They set up false witnesses who said, "This man never stopped saying things against this holy place."

[6] What is this holy place? The temple, exactly, "this holy place" refers to the Jerusalem temple. They're accusing him of preaching against the temple and the law.

"For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place, and will change the customs that Moses handed onto us."

[7] Now notice, the writer here is telling you these are false accusations. Are they false accusations? Was he really preaching against the temple? Remember, Jesus is portrayed in some of the Gospels as himself having predicted that the temple would be destroyed. Does that mean that Jesus was preaching against the temple? Some Christian writers very quickly portray Jesus as teaching that his followers don't have to keep the Jewish law. I don't think that's actually correct for the historical Jesus as we'll talk about when we get to the historical Jesus. That's clearly how some early Christian writers are portraying Jesus as teaching that, you followers of mine don't have to keep the Jewish law. That's what they're accusing Stephen of doing. So is this a false accusation or is this just maybe what Stephen actually was teaching, as being a different form of the message about Jesus? Notice then we get to—these are the accusations about Stephen, but then in chapter 7 we get Stephen's own speech.

[8] Now this is very interesting. I wish I could read the whole thing because it's rhetorically very powerful. What Stephen does is he starts off just talking about the God who appeared to

Abraham in Mesopotamia. He tells the story that any of us Christians would recognize as the story of the Old Testament God and his interactions with Abraham and Moses, and which Jews would recognize as reflected in Jewish scripture, in Jewish tradition. That's the way the most part of the first half of that chapter 7 goes, it's a retelling of the Hebrew Bible story about God, the God of Israel. What really becomes interesting is, though, when he gets to—around verse 37 in chapter 7, I mean 35 in chapter 7, so look at that with me. Now right before this, notice he says:

“I have surely seen the mistreatment of my people [this is God talking] who were in Egypt and have heard their groaning and I have come down to rescue them. Come now I will send you to Egypt.”

- [9] God's telling Moses, at this point, he's going to send them to Egypt to deliver the people and we expect the whole story then of the Exodus to come next. What does it say in verse 35?

“It was this Moses whom they rejected when they said, ‘Who made you ruler and judge?’ and whom God now sent as both ruler and liberator through the angel who appeared to him in the bush.”

- [10] In other words, instead of emphasizing here Moses' activity of leading the Israelites out of captivity, he emphasizes another aspect of the story that's there in the Old Testament story because, yes, one of the Israelites—the story is: Moses comes upon two Israelites who are fighting. They're both—they are slaves in Egypt at this time and he says to one of the Israelites, is that any way to treat your brother? That Israelite rebukes him and says, who set you up as a judge over us? Notice that's the verse that Stephen centers on at this point to emphasize the story about Moses. Not so much Moses as just deliverer but Moses as someone rejected by the people. Have we seen that before? Uh-huh, one of the themes of Luke-Acts is prophets get rejected by the people. Verse 35, that's what he emphasizes. Let's just keep reading there.

“He led them out, having performed wonders and signs in Egypt at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness for forty years. This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, ‘God

will raise up a prophet for you from your own people, as he raised me up.’”

- [11] Now in the Old Testament it seems like Moses is talking about—anybody know? Who follows Moses as the leader of the people of Israel? Yes sir?

[12] *Student:* Joshua.

- [13] *Professor Dale Martin:* Joshua, exactly. It sounds like Moses is predicting Joshua's being raised up after he dies, but that's not what Stephen thinks. “This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, ‘God will raise you ...’”

“He is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai with our ancestors; he received living oracles to give to us. Our ancestors were unwilling to obey him; instead they pushed him aside in their hearts and turned back to Egypt.”

- [14] Then it tells about the golden calf story, how the Israelites rejected Moses and the law, and made a golden fat calf to worship. Now look at 7:44:

“Our ancestors had the tent of testimony in the wilderness, as God directed when he spoke to Moses, ordering him to make it according to the pattern he had seen.”

- [15] This refers to the stories in Exodus about the tabernacle, “the tent of testimony.” This is a big tent that's—the construction that we just talked about, this is where God would meet the people Israel and Moses before the building of the temple. Stephen is fine with this, he's saying, God instructed Moses, and Moses directed the people to construct this tent of witness or meeting of God with Israel, and that's where God chose to be with his people according to the Bible. He gives that little history. But then look at 45,

“Our ancestors in turn brought it in with Joshua when they dispossessed the nations that God drove out before our ancestors. And it was there until the time of David ...”

- [16] So up until the time of David the people of Israel had a tabernacle where they met God.

“...who found favor with God and asked that he might find a dwelling place for the house of Jacob.”

- [17] David was the first one who raised the idea of having a temple to God, not just a tabernacle but a temple, that’s where we’re going in the history here.

“But it was Solomon who built the house for him. Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made with human hands.”

- [18] Where does the story go? The story’s gone fine up to this point. It’s just like we see it in Exodus and the Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible, David wanted to build a temple for God, God said, no. Solomon comes up later and he wants to build temple and finally God says yes, at least according to part of the Hebrew Bible. But another part of the Hebrew Bible always had a little bit of a prejudice against the idea that anybody could build a house for God. Some prophets seem not to like the temple so much, other prophets seem to like the temple so much. What Stephen is doing, he’s pulling out of the Hebrew Bible that kind of anti-temple prophetic strain, and he’s emphasizing that as part of his message. Then notice what he quotes there, a passage from the Hebrew Bible, and then in verse 51:

“You stiff necked people, uncircumcised of heart and ears, you are forever opposing the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do.”

- [19] What happened to Stephen? He just went—all of a sudden his panties are really in a wad for no obvious reason. He’s been telling the story of the building of the temple. He’s been going along fine, now he starts—he’s gone from preaching now to insulting his audience. He’s insulting the Jews in Jerusalem; he’s accusing them of being on the wrong side of history. Why? Because they wanted to build a temple.

“Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? They killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, and now you have become his betrayers and murderers. You are the ones who received the law as ordained by angels.”

- [20] What? Angels gave the Jewish law? I thought God gave the law, the Torah, on Sinai. I thought God wrote the stones with his finger and gave them to Moses, and Moses carried them down the mountain. Well, yeah, that’s what the scripture says, but by this time in Jewish history it was not uncommon for Jews, even pious Jews, to believe that God did not himself directly write the law and give it to Moses, angels did. Most of them believed that this was with God’s pleasure and principle. God wanted the angels to deliver the law through Jews, but at least they put, between God and Moses, angels. And angels, according to some of these traditions, were the ones who actually gave the law to the Israelites and to Moses. As we’ll come to see, Paul believed this also, it wasn’t an uncommon view among Jews.

- [21] But notice what Stephen does, he actually uses this tradition that the angels were the ones who gave the law to Moses to distance God a bit from the law, to make the law a little bit less connected to God. He demotes the law by reading the angels in between them. Stephen has done two things in this speech. He’s grabbed hold of a certain prophetic tradition that we know is already there in the Bible, which criticized the Jerusalem temple. It’s there in some prophets, why should God need a house? God doesn’t need a house, God lives everywhere. Stephen pulls on that tradition that’s already in the Bible, and then he adds this tradition about—that was common at the time about angels being the ones who actually gave the law to Moses rather than God directly. Then he turns all this on his Jewish attackers, his critics, and that’s what he accuses them of, and then says, you crucified Jesus just like the people rejected Moses and all the prophets.

- [22] When they heard these things they became enraged and ground their teeth at Stephen, and they stoned him.

- [23] Is it any surprise they stoned him? Now I ask the question again, when the author of Acts sets these things up as false accusations against Stephen, who’s right? Stephen or the author? Stephen actually does look like, in his own speech, to be attacking both the law and the temple. That is “this holy place” and Moses. I think what’s going on here is another place we see the author of Acts taking material he has

before him, and sticking it into a place, and then writing around it. For example, the author of Acts is the one who says, these were false accusations against Stephen, they set up and they were totally false, Stephen was totally innocent, but then he actually includes Stephen's speech which backs up the accusations. The other thing that makes this seem to me clearly that the author is using prior material is that this view of the temple that Stephen presents, this view that the temple is not good, that God doesn't like the temple, and it's only stiff necked and uncircumcised of heart people who believe in the temple. That's not the view of the author of Acts.

[24] How do you know that? Because over and over again Luke, the author of Acts, actually portrays the disciples as meeting in the temple right after the resurrection of Jesus; where does it say they met and had prayers and preached, and prayed? In the temple, the disciples of Jesus meet in the temple. They're not anti-temple. When Paul goes off around the world, and then he comes back to Jerusalem, what does he do to show his piety? He takes a vow, a Nazarite vow, he shaves his head, he donates money which goes to the temple for sacrifices, and he himself goes to the temple to worship. Paul worships in the temple. The author of Acts is not himself anti-temple. He believes that the Jerusalem temple is just fine for Jews. He actually doesn't think Gentiles need to pay that much attention to it, but he believes it's perfectly fine for Jews. But he includes in here a speech by Stephen that is both anti-temple and somewhat anti-law. This shows that this author is using these different sources the speech of Stephen comes from a pre-Lukan source and its set into the book of Acts.

[25] Now that means we can see his editorial activity, but notice what it also tells us we can see. We actually have, then, two different forms of early Christianity. Luke represents one and Stephen even embedded within Luke's own document represents another. We've got two different ideas, is the law of Moses something that's given by angels and therefore demoted and not very good, in which the law of Moses gets criticized, or is the law of Moses perfectly fine? The Jewish law with—that signals their ethnicity as being people of Israel, that's the point of view of Luke. Is the temple something that is good, that's a sign of

God's covenant with Israel, which seems to be the view of most of the people in Luke-Acts or is the temple something that shows that you're stiff necked if you believe in its efficacy? That seems to be Stephen's view. In other words, we have little hints here that even within one book in the New Testament we have different kinds of early Christianity represented with slightly different theologies.

2. *The Destruction of Jerusalem in Luke*

[26] Now we can also see it several other times where Luke takes and changes things. I talked about this at the very last of my session last time, but I want to just reiterate it very quickly. Some of you, if you don't have Throckmorton's Gospel parallels, or some other Gospel parallels, this is why these are very useful, because I'm going to use this that way I have Mark right here and Luke right here for the same passage and I can compare them very, very directly, see exactly what words they have different. If you don't have that put one of your fingers where we talked about last time, Mark 13:14-27, and put another finger at Luke 21:20-33. And if you have Throckmorton it's paragraph 216, section 216 in Throckmorton. Look at the Mark passage first, 3:14:

“But when you see the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be (let the reader understand) ...”

[27] And then he says, get out of town, get out of Judea. Go to the mountains because all hell is breaking loose anytime, and then he gives several things that are there. If you look at Luke where Luke has a parallel in Luke 21:20, Luke doesn't say “the desolating sacrilege,” he just says,

“When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near.”

[28] There's a common wording there but it's slightly different. Then Luke also says:

“Those inside this city should leave, those out in the country should not enter it.”

[29] And then you go on. There's great distress in both places. Look at verse 21 of Mark 13:

“If anyone says to you at this time, ‘Look, here’s the Messiah!’ or ‘Look, there he is!’ do not believe it.”

[30] [These are] false prophets. Now that’s also going to be in Luke but in a totally different place that’s contained in Luke 17. So Luke’s using that false prophet material but not in this context.

[31] Then look at Mark 13:24:

“But in those days after that suffering, the sun will be dark and the moon will not give its light, the stars will be falling from heaven.”

[32] In other words, after all this other stuff he’s told you, that’s when the big catastrophe takes place. The sun eclipses, the stars fall from heaven, the moon is dark. Luke also has something like that in Luke 21:25,

“There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on earth distress among nations caused by the roaring of the seas.”

[33] Luke gives slightly different material. The problem is Luke then—yes, notice how right after that it says—Mark has the Son of Man coming with the clouds of glory in verse 26. Right after that you have the Son of Man coming down, but Luke has a bunch more material and you don’t get anything until you see Luke 21:32 where he says,

“This generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away.”

[34] Then where does—well, I must have passed it. Where is it that Luke talks about the time of the Gentiles? Give me the verse—24? Yes, that’s right. In 24:

“There will be great distress on earth and wrath, they will fall by the edge of the sword and be taken away as captive among all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles has been fulfilled.”

[35] Notice Luke inserts there something that’s not there in the other sources, which is that

Jerusalem will be captured, it will be destroyed, it will have a time of the Gentiles in between. And then Luke goes on to talk about the coming of Jesus and the very end. Again, one of these places where you can clearly see the editorial seams of the writer and you have the time of the Gentiles. One of the things that we’ve seen is that Luke is carefully constructing his sources to make his own point.

[36] What I want to do now is now turn our attention to, okay, what are some of those points? What are some of the points we’ve already talked about? What are some of Luke’s basic messages? One, Jesus is like the prophets; Jesus is like Elijah and Elisha. Two, prophets get rejected by their people. Three, when you’re rejected by the people then the message goes out to other corners of the earth, and then this schematic view of history that we talked about later from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria, to the ends of the earth.

3. *Luke’s Gospel to the Jews First*

[37] Now let’s look at how some of these things play out. One of Luke’s most important messages is “to the Jew first.” Let’s look at Luke 1:5-7, we’re going to spend a little bit of time in Luke now, the beginning parts of Luke. Luke is very concerned to show, as I said last time, that Jesus is a good Jewish boy, his parents are good Jewish parents, he comes from good Jewish extended family. Luke 1:5, this is right after the very beginning of the prologue which I mentioned last—which I talked about last time.

In the days of King Herod of Judea there was a priest named Zachariah who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was a descendant of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord. But they had no children because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years.

[38] Doesn’t that sound kind of familiar? Old, very righteous couple, can’t have children, she’s getting on in years, she’s barren, Abraham and Sarah, sounds like lots of—it sounds like Abraham and Sarah, it also is going to sound

like Hannah, the mother of Samuel. These are these wonderful stories in the Bible about this old couple who want to have children and can't have children. So this is already evoking this idea of Jesus' family being like a story—they're a family like—you might find them right there in scripture, they're just like that.

- [39] Look at 1:25, this is when Elizabeth conceives, for five months she remained in seclusion, she said,

“This is what the Lord has done for me when he looked favorably on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people.”

- [40] Sounds like its right out of 1 Samuel, second chapter. Look—keep one finger right there—in fact first read 1:46—this is the Magnificat. Look at 1:46, Mary said:

“My soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. For he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed.”

- [41] I read this last time, there's a lot of message about the rich will be sent to go away, the poor will be raised up, the reversal of status in the world. Now keep your finger there and go all the way to the Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible, to 1 Samuel. It's right before the two books called Kings and right after the book called Ruth. 1 Samuel tells about the birth of the prophet Samuel, his mother is Hannah, and here's her story in chapter 2 of 1 Samuel,

Hannah prayed and said, “My heart exalts in the Lord, my strength is exalted in my God, my mouth derides my enemies because I rejoice in my victory. There is no Holy One like the Lord, no one beside you; there is no rock like our God. Talk no more so proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth, for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by his actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble gird on strength.”

- [42] It's a whole song, you can read the whole thing there, but if you just keep one finger at 1 Samuel 2, and one finger at Luke 1:46, Mary's song is obviously fashioned on the song of Hannah. The message is the reversal of status

of rich and poor, weak and powerful. That's not all. Look at 1:14. This is talking about the birth of John the Baptist, his father is the priest Zachariah, his mother is Elizabeth. And this is the prophecy that comes with the angel to Zachariah.

“You will have joy and gladness and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

- [43] John the Baptist is portrayed like Elijah. You read stories about Elijah; similar things are said about him. Look at 2:36, we're going to move quickly,

There was a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phaneul, of the tribe of Asher.

- [44] You hear how biblical that sounds? That's real biblical. The guy who wrote this, I don't think he was a Jew, I think he was probably a Gentile, but he spoke Greek as his main language. It's not like he's just automatically talking this way in a sense, I think he's consciously constructing his book to sound like the Bible, to sound like the Jewish scripture.

- [45] She was of great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four she never left the temple [there's the temple] but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child [that's Jesus] to all who are looking for redemption of Jerusalem.

- [46] Anna is this holy woman, just like many of the holy women in the Bible. Then you have these psalms and prayers. I've already talked about the Magnificat, that Mary says. Look also at 1:68, this is the prayer that Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist prays:

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a mighty Savior for us in the house of his servant David.”

[47] In other words, he goes on to quote basically what sounds like a psalm. It's very much a psalm-like piece of literary poetry there. Mary had her Magnificat, which sounds like scripture. Zachariah has his Benedictus, again these are these songs that if you're Roman Catholic, or if you're Episcopalian or—do Lutherans say the Magnificat and the Benedictus in these things in liturgy? Any Lutherans in here? Any other denominations in here say these things? I'm not sure I know which ones actually say the Magnificat, "my soul magnifies the Lord," or the Benedictus. If you're Roman Catholic or Episcopalian you say these psalms as part of the liturgy. They come from the New Testament but they sound very much like the Old Testament. Zachariah has one; we call it the Benedictus because in Latin, if you had a Latin Bible in front of you, the first word of that psalm would be benedictus, "blessed be the Lord God of Israel." The other psalm is 2:19, which Simeon prays. Simeon's this holy man living in the temple, again there's that theme of the temple. When he sees Jesus the baby he says,

"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace according to your word. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles."

[48] Already at the very beginning of the Gospel, though Jesus himself won't go to the Gentiles during his life, this is something that Luke will wait until Acts to show us. Simeon predicts it, he prophesied about it in this little psalm. This is called the *Nunc Dimittis* in Christian liturgical tradition, because in Latin "now departs your servant," that's what the Latin means.

[49] Then there's the piety of the holy family already mentioned before. Only Luke tells us about the circumcision of Jesus, in 2:21. Only Luke tells us in 2:22, this is worth looking at, "That after the prescribed period according to the law of Moses," Jesus' family followed the law of Moses very well.

They brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every first born male shall be designated as holy to the Lord." They

offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves and two young pigeons.

[50] In other words, over and over again, I could cite several different other examples, Luke wants to portray the holy family, John the Baptist's family, and the holy family of Jesus and Jesus himself as all being good Jews who honor the temple, who keep the law. They do everything like they're supposed to do. It's no surprise that when you get to the book of Acts the theme that comes out more than anything is "to the Jew first."

[51] Look at Acts, I'm not going to read all of this, but Acts 13:46, this is Paul and Barnabas, they've been speaking on the Sabbath day to a crowd in a synagogue and the people—some of them believe and some get jealous. In 13:46:

Then both Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly saying, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you [that is to the Jews]. Since you reject it and judge yourselves to be unworthy of eternal life, we are now turning to the Gentiles."

[52] It happens again—the same thing is said in Acts 18:6, the same thing is said in 26:20. Over and over again, see Paul goes to a town, he goes first to the synagogue, he preaches in the synagogue, the Jews reject him, he kind of shakes the dust off his feet, you Jews rejected the Gospel therefore we're going to the Gentiles. But he never gets to a point where he finally and completely turns away from the Jews; he keeps going back to the Jews in every town he gets too. This idea that the message must be preached first to the Jews and only then to the Gentiles, is a point that Acts makes over, and over, and over again. So is it any surprise that in the Gospel of Luke he wanted to—he's careful to set up Jesus as a good Jew? That's the beginning of it. It's only later that it will go to the Gentiles, so that pattern gets played out over and over again until the very end of Acts.

[53] Now look at the end of Acts, chapter 28 of Acts, verse 28. This is at the end of Paul's last speech in Acts. He was in Jerusalem, he was actually trying to go worship in the temple, but some of the bad Jews who didn't like Paul thought he was trying to take Gentiles into the temple, which would have been against the

law. So they grab him, a big riot ensues, and they take Paul before the Sanhedrin, the big sort of Jerusalem kind of senate type body, and they put him on trial. Paul's message in all of these things is that, I didn't do anything wrong, I'm just here to obey the law, I'm here to serve my people, to honor the traditions of my people and my ethnic group, the Jews. And then eventually, though, such a big dispute arises that Paul is arrested by the Roman governor in order—he says to protect Paul from being lynched. Paul is imprisoned then. Finally Paul is afraid he's going to lose a trial with these—his Jewish enemies on one side, so he appeals to the Roman governor straight to the Emperor, he says, I'm a Roman citizen, I appeal to the Emperor, so that means he has to go to Rome. They have to take him to Rome for trial.

- [54] The last part, chapter 28 is Paul in Rome. He preaches again there, he has the same kind of things happen, he rents a hall where he again conducts classes and conducts sermons, and that sort of thing. And then this last sermon that he's given to the Jewish leaders and the Jewish elders, and notice how it turns out he says:

“Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles. They will listen.” He lived there two whole years at his own expense. He welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

- [55] In other words, the very end of the two-volume work ends with this message that the message was preached to the Jews, they rejected it, so Paul and the others went to the Gentiles. And it ends up in Rome, the capital of the whole world which represents the idea that the Gospel has now proceeded to the whole world. Isn't it funny that this author doesn't tell us what happened to Paul? Does anybody know how Paul supposedly died? Anybody know? Yes sir?

- [56] *Student:* Decapitated.

- [57] *Professor Dale Martin:* He was decapitated, not accidentally. It was a Roman sword that did it. According to Christian tradition, Paul was martyred by being beheaded because he

was a Roman soldier [correction: citizen], again according to tradition, Paul actually never tells us he was a—I mean a Roman citizen. He never tells us that he was a Roman citizen, but according to tradition he was, and in Acts claims that he was a Roman citizen. According to that tradition you can't crucify a Roman citizen. So the tradition was that Paul was martyred but unlike Peter who was crucified upside down, according to tradition, Paul was beheaded in Rome, probably sometime in the 60s, that's the tradition. Why doesn't Luke tell us that story? Wouldn't that be the more logical end of the story? He's told us about Paul's ministry, he's told us about Paul's call, he's told us Paul becoming an Apostle, he's told about Paul's different missionary journeys, and he ends up with Paul living in rented rooms in Rome. I don't think this author wanted to tell us about how the story ended, if it actually ended with Paul being martyred in Rome, because that kind of would spoil the story, wouldn't it? Although you kind of could get the hint that, since all prophets and all messengers of the Gospel, according to this author, are martyred and rejected, then maybe he could have portrayed Paul as a martyr and told about his death after all because, and that's a nice little segue way into the next major theme of Luke-Acts that I'm going to talk about, prophets as martyrs.

4. *The Prophet-Martyr in Luke and Acts*

- [58] Prophets in Luke-Acts get martyred. Jesus was one of them. Notice, first John the Baptist, I'm not going to read this because we're running a little bit out of time. John the Baptist himself gets martyred. Jesus also is a prophet martyr. Look at Luke 9:31, now unfortunately we're going to be going back and forth from Luke to Acts, so you might want to keep fingers in both places. This is a very important point, 9:31 of Luke, this is the transfiguration story, you know how it goes. Jesus takes some of his disciples Peter, John, and James up onto a mountain and while they're up there, this is on their way to Jerusalem, clouds overcome, it's thunder and lightning. Imagine Cecil B. DeMille, Hollywood type lighting effects. And Jesus appears there with Moses and Elijah flaming, they're shining. And Peter says something, and there's a voice from heaven, all that sort of thing. But notice most of the Gospels don't tell us what Jesus and Moses

and Elijah were talking about up on the mountain. Luke tells us, [verse] 31:

They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure which was about to be accomplished at Jerusalem.

[59] Now the Greek word there for departure is exodus. Yep, that word, the very word of the second book of the Bible in Greek. They're talking to Jesus about his exodus. If you read that in Greek that would immediately—now I know why Moses is there talking to him. He needs some advice on how to do an exodus, and the exodus doesn't refer to just his leaving the country, it refers to his martyrdom. And Jesus also will be portrayed as the prophet to the Jews first. I've already talked about Stephen being a prophet and a martyr.

[60] The end of Acts with Paul in Rome, again I just read it to you, Paul ends up as a prophet to the Jews, he is the innocent martyr, he's proclaimed innocent over and over again. Several times, as a matter of fact, Paul will be proclaimed—first Jesus is proclaimed as innocent. People—the different rulers will say, this guy's innocent, he's innocent, what are you getting upset about? Over and over again, Paul himself will be taken to governors, Roman governors, and they'll say, well I would have released him but now he's appealed to Rome so we've got to send him to Rome. When he gets to Rome, even the Jewish elders in Rome, who first see him, they say now we've heard rumors, Paul, about you, we've heard some bad stuff about you, but we don't have any good evidence. You're innocent as far as we're concerned. Even the Jewish leaders in Rome declare Paul innocent, so, over and over again, people in the Book of Acts and Luke are portrayed as innocent martyrs and prophets. Notice how we see there all these different diversities of Christianity.

[61] Those are some basic themes, but if you take—what do these different Christian groups believe about the Jewish law? What did Moses believe about the Jewish law? Anybody remember? What was Moses stance on what people should do with the Jewish law? You know, just remember back a week or so. What did I say, Moses? I mean Matthew, I'm sorry. I'm crazy. What was Matthew's view of the Mosaic Law? What did Matthew believe about the Mosaic Law? All followers of Jesus should

obey it, it's just there. Matthew doesn't ever get rid of the Jewish law; he never has Jesus get rid of the Jewish law. What does Mark say about the Jewish law? Well, Jesus declared all foods clean, so Jesus modifies the Jewish law in a substantial way for Mark. What does Luke believe about the Jewish law? This is an interesting point. Luke believes that the Jewish law is the ethnic contract, if you will, the ethnic traditions of the Jews. It came from God, it came from Moses, and Jews keep it, so throughout Acts, if you notice, the Jewish followers of Jesus continue to keep the law, even Paul. The Gentile followers of Jesus aren't required to keep the law. It's as if—and people in the ancient world knew this, Americans have their law, Canadians have their law, Britain's have their law, the French have their law, sort of.

[62] Every nation and ethnic group has its own laws, right? This is the way Luke is thinking about the Jewish law. He says, of course it's good, it's good for Jews, so should Jews avoid pork? Yeah, they're Jews. Should Jews be circumcised? Yeah, they're Jews. Even if they're followers of Jesus they still keep the Jewish law. Gentiles? Totally other story; why should they not keep the Law of Moses? They're not Jews. The view of the Law of Moses that you get in Luke and Acts, is that the law is good ethnic law and custom for the Jewish people, and it's perfectly fine for them to obey it and to keep it. It's just not binding on the Gentile followers of Jesus. They will have other ethical things to follow, and he gives you some of those things in chapter 15. That's actually very different from what we've seen in Matthew or even in Mark, right? Luke has a different view of the law. These are diversities of Christianity we see. They weren't all in agreement about this. They probably didn't even know what the others thought. They may have been living in different geographical areas, and just developed their own different views about what is the Jewish law and how should it affect the followers of Jesus.

[63] When we get to Paul it'll be another story entirely because, it may surprise you, Paul will believe—Luke seems to believe that—he doesn't really come out and say it. If there's a Gentile who sort of wants to keep kosher, or wants to get circumcised, well, it's no big deal, in fact he has Paul circumcise Timothy, his follower

at one point. Timothy wasn't circumcised, they're going to be going through some Jewish areas, so Paul says, yeah, let's circumcise Timothy. Well the Paul of his letters doesn't like that at all. He basically says, if you're a follower of Jesus and a Gentile, you cannot keep the Jewish law; otherwise you will fall from grace. Trying to keep the law, the Law of Moses, if you're a Gentile disciple of Jesus is anathema for Paul. And that'll get him in big trouble with both Jews and Jewish Christians, Jewish followers of Jesus. The point I'm making is that when we get to Paul we'll see another different kind of view of the law, so it all shows that these people were trying to figure out what does it mean to follow a Jewish Messiah if you're not Jewish? What does it mean that we're following a Messiah who was predicted by Moses in the law and yet we're not keeping the law? In fact, they would say, what does it mean to have a Messiah at all? What does Messiah mean? Here's the last little difference I'll say in the next two or three minutes because we'll come back to this also. We've already seen different Christologies, one of those two bit words again. What does Christology mean? Anybody?

[64] *Student:* Whether you believe Jesus was human or divine.

[65] *Professor Dale Martin:* Whether you believe Jesus was human or divine. Very good, it means any doctrine of Jesus. It could be whether he was human or divine, it could be whether he's a fish, any teaching about Jesus is a Christology. It's what is your theology of Jesus Christ, that's Christology and we've already seen different ones. For example, I've already said Mark believes that Jesus' death was a ransom. Jesus died for your sins. His

death was sort of like a sacrifice, say. But at one point in Mark 10:45 Jesus says to his disciples, "The Son of Man came to give his life as a ransom for many." In other words, Jesus' death is for you, to buy you up, to save you. That's picked up in Matthew 20:28, do you know what? That saying is never found in Luke. In fact, you can find nothing in the Gospel of Luke which identifies the death of Jesus as being an atonement for sins of people. Luke does not take Jesus' death as being a ransom in the way that Mark and Matthew do. Why? Jesus' death is important for Luke, right? But again what is the meaning of Jesus' death in Luke? A prophet martyr. He's the innocent prophet who is martyred for his prophecy. That's the meaning of the death of Jesus in Luke and Acts. We have very different Christologies about the meaning of the death of Jesus already in these different Gospels.

[66] All of this is just to say we're going to find this again, we can find it in John, we're going to find it in other places. These early Christian texts, if you read them really, really carefully, not quickly, carefully, you'll see amazing ways that it opens up whole windows into the very earliest period of Christianity that most modern people have no idea existed. The idea that there could be Christians who didn't believe Jesus' life was an atonement. The idea that there were Christians who believed every Christian should keep the Jewish law. The idea we've also seen that there could have been Christians who believed that the God who created the world was evil. These were all there. We'll talk about another form of it next week. See you next week.

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