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## Editors' Notes

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## Editors' Notes

D'ESTA LOVE AND STUART LOVE

Growing up we learned a lot about the book of Acts in Bible classes. We memorized the missionary journeys of Paul. As young people we debated who was the greatest apostle—Peter or Paul. We heard preachers proclaim the various conversion stories in Acts—three thousand on the day of Pentecost, Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, Paul (told three different times), Peter and Cornelius, converts to Paul's preaching in Antioch of Pisidia, Philippi, Thessalonica and Athens, and Priscilla and Aquila who taught Apollos the way of God more accurately. We remember stories of Paul before rulers, his perilous journey to Rome. And we remember the ending of Acts, do we not? There we find Paul living in Rome for two whole years, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance as he awaits his trial, the outcome of which we never know.

Acts is a unique writing for a number of reasons. For example, one cannot appreciate its message without first knowing that it is the continuation of the Gospel of Luke. Its emphasis on the reliability of God's word begins with Mary (Luke 1.35) and is carried forward in the mission of the church (Acts 1.8) to Paul's journey to Rome (Acts 27.24). Its stress on the fulfillment of God's promises begins with the ministry of Jesus and is carried forward once more in the life of the church. Important figures in Acts duplicate aspects of Jesus' life: like Jesus, Peter raises the dead (Acts 9.36–43; cf. Luke 7.11–17), and like Jesus, Paul's journey to Jerusalem and Rome echoes Jesus' journey to Jerusalem (Acts 19.21; cf. Luke 9.51–52). The writing's attribution of God's saving deeds to the work of the Holy Spirit also begins with Jesus' ministry (Luke 1.4) and moves forward to empower the church not only in its beginning (Acts 2.1–13) but also in everything it becomes and does (Acts 15.28; 16.1–7). Have you not heard some say that the title of the writing should not be "The Acts of the Apostles" but "The Acts of the Holy Spirit"? All that happens in this magisterial piece is prompted by the Spirit of God.

The stories we heard as children are gripping accounts when read afresh as adults—Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5.1–11), Paul before King Agrippa (Acts 26.2–23), and Paul's adventures on the high seas (Acts 27.1–44). In these stories and speeches, too many to number, Luke depicts the continuity of the church with Israel. Indeed, the gospel is the declaration that through Jesus' saving deeds Israel has been reconstituted. This fulfillment is radical; the new Israel has been given a new structure by the operation of the Spirit through the apostolic mission. True, its roots are in Moses but its re-creation includes all flesh who have faith in Jesus, including uncircumcised Gentiles. This re-creation is possible because God has vindicated and exalted his Messiah, showing that his death was not the contradiction and scandal that it seemed, but that it was purposed by God as the road to his glorification. Is it any wonder that converts baptized in Jesus' name possessed a unity and harmony that found expression in prayer and in the common sharing of property (Acts 2.43–47)?

More could be said about the richness of Acts for the life of the church, but we must introduce the writers and articles of this issue based on the *Leaven* Symposium and several keynote sermons of Pepperdine University's Bible Lectures of 2010.

Fittingly, we open with a powerful theological overview of both the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts by **ROLLIN RAMSARAN**. “Luke’s storytelling,” Ramsaran informs us, “takes the previous Old Testament scriptural account of the people of God and advances it into the new key of the Spirit’s work in Jesus—and then, the work of this ‘Jesus-shaped’ Spirit in the early churches of the movement.” Heroic themes in the life and ministry of Jesus are picked up in the Acts of the Apostles. “Luke presents a continuous story, intertwined by themes and structure.” **CHRISTOPHER R. HUTSON** narrows the playing field as he examines passages in Acts 2 and 4 to offer a “model of mutual aid that might serve as a Christian alternative to commercial insurance.” **MARY LOU HUTSON** then carries forward the theme of mutual aid in Acts 2 to our social setting. She considers how the passage “may have motivated the founders of several contemporary life insurance companies.” Our Symposium papers conclude with an examination of the topic of prayer in Acts by **JENNIFER HALE CHRISTY**. Her excellent effort can be summarized in two words, *they prayed*. Beyond the Symposium articles we include three of the keynote speeches at the Pepperdine Lectures by **SHON SMITH**, **MARK LOVE** and **DAVID FLEER**. Shon Smith explores the statement in Acts 1.4, “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” by affirming that “Christ sends us, just as he did the eleven, to bear witness that he has conquered sin and death so that all might enjoy freedom and life.” Love brings to life Peter’s sermon in Acts 2 imploring his audience to allow this speech and the book of Acts to become “the universal language of the whole world,” that is, when Peter tells his audience to call on the name of the Lord for their salvation so long ago, that day “has lived in the hearts of some for a long time. It has lived in their hearts like an ache. Like a key change. Like a flower in the dead of winter.” Finally, Fleer ably pursues the theme of the storm at sea and the shipwreck of Paul in Acts 27, asking a theological question in different ways, “So, why the shipwreck in Acts. *Why?*”

We close out the Pepperdine Lectures theme on the book of Acts with another wonderful liturgical reading by **LEE MAGNESS**. We encourage you to read his piece aloud. You will be blessed. We also encourage you to use it as a reading in your worship services and/or Bible classes at church. We’ve been blessed over several years by Lee’s creative work. Finally, we include an article by **KATHY PULLEY** that was the basis of a speech she made at Pepperdine University at an earlier time at a conference for women in ministry.

We open 2011 with an issue on the Gospel of Mark edited by Jeff Miller, who teaches New Testament at Milligan College. It will be followed by an issue on the Gospel of Matthew edited by Mark Black, who teaches New Testament at Lipscomb University. Our final treatment of the Synoptic Gospels will be an issue on the Gospel of Luke edited by Kindy Pfremer De Long, who teaches New Testament at Pepperdine University. As usual, our final issue of the year will be based on the Pepperdine University Bible Lectures.

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