

Dr. Robert Peterson, Theology of Luke-Acts, Session 18, Marshall: Progress Despite Opposition, Inclusion Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Peterson, Theology of Luke-Acts, Session 18, Marshall: Progress Despite Opposition, Inclusion, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This excerpt from Dr. Robert Peterson's teaching on Howard Marshall's session regarding the theology of Luke-Acts explores several key themes. **The material highlights the progress of the early Christian movement despite facing significant opposition, drawing parallels between Jesus' experiences and the apostles' trials. A central focus is the inclusion of Gentiles into the people of God, detailing the tensions and resolutions surrounding this development in the early church. Furthermore, the session examines the life and organization of the nascent church, noting its practices in worship, leadership, and missionary work as a pattern for later Christians. Ultimately, the discussion underscores the triumphant advancement of the gospel and Luke's purpose in providing an edifying account for his readers.**

**2. 27 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Peterson, Theology of Luke-Acts, Session 18 – Double click
icon to play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (New Testament → Gospels → Luke).**



**Peterson_Theo_LkA
cts_Session18.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Peterson, Theology of Luke-Acts, Session 18, Marshall: Progress Despite Opposition, Inclusion

Briefing Document: The Theology of Luke-Acts (Session 18 - Howard Marshall)

Source: Excerpts from "Peterson_Theo_Lk_Acts_EN_Session18.pdf" by Dr. Robert Peterson, summarizing Howard Marshall's commentary on Acts.

Date: October 26, 2023

Prepared for: [Your Intended Audience]

Executive Summary: This briefing document summarizes the main theological themes discussed in Session 18 of Dr. Robert Peterson's teaching on the Theology of Luke-Acts, focusing on Howard Marshall's commentary on the Book of Acts. The session covers three key themes: the progress of the gospel despite opposition, the inclusion of Gentiles into the people of God, and the life and organization of the early church. Marshall highlights Luke's emphasis on God's purposeful movement in history, the challenges and resolutions surrounding Gentile inclusion, and Luke's depiction of the early church as a model for later Christians.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. Progress Despite Opposition:

- Luke emphasizes the consistent opposition faced by the early church in its mission to spread the gospel, mirroring the opposition Jesus himself faced leading to his crucifixion.
- "Luke recognizes that just as the way of Jesus took him through opposition, culminating in judicial murder, so too the path of the word of God is beset by opposition."
- Opposition originated from various sources, including Jewish leaders, pagan sympathizers manipulated by Jews, and even ambivalent Roman magistrates.
- "Usually, it began with the Jews who viewed the evangelism of the Gentiles with disfavor. But in many cases, the Jews were able to gain support from pagan sympathizers in acts of violence against the missionaries."
- Despite injustice and persecution, Christians were called to stand firm and faithfully continue preaching the gospel. When forced to leave a town, they

moved on to new opportunities for evangelism, following Jesus' instructions (Luke 9:5).

- "When they are commanded to stop preaching, their answer is a defiant refusal to do so...they simply carry on evangelism wherever they find an opportunity to do so."
- Paul's trials are presented by Luke as examples where he used the courtroom as an opportunity to bear witness to the gospel, prioritizing proclamation over self-defense.
- "His concern is not so much to defend himself as to proclaim the gospel." (Referring to Paul in court)
- Ultimately, Luke portrays the word of God as making triumphant progress despite all obstacles, emphasizing God's hand upon the missionaries and the eventual fulfillment of His purpose.
- "God's declared purpose will be fulfilled, no matter what the opposition. Acts is the story of the triumphant progress of the word of God."

2. Gentile Inclusion:

- The inclusion of Gentiles into the people of God is a major theological theme in Acts, reflecting the unfolding of Jesus' commission in Acts 1:8.
- "As that purpose is played out, the Gentiles are included in the people of God. So the fourth theme is the inclusion of the Gentiles in the people of God."
- This inclusion caused significant tension within the early church, primarily concerning whether Gentile converts needed to adhere to Jewish law, including circumcision.
- "The essence of the problem was whether the rise of the church had produced a new society that was different from Judaism...Were they not required to accept the Jewish law, including circumcision?"
- Luke presents this development as divinely willed, occurring somewhat unexpectedly for the early Jewish Christians.
- "This progression is seen by Luke as divinely willed and prophesied. It was a turn of events that came about apart from any conscious planning by the church."

- Two main views existed regarding the nature of the church: one seeing it as essentially a Jewish institution with Gentile additions, and the other as a new Israel composed of both Jews and Gentiles with a progressive separation from Judaism. Marshall suggests the truth lies between these extremes, emphasizing the Jewish origins but highlighting a new people of God where Gentiles are not required to become Jews.
- "In our view, Luke stresses the Jewish origins of the church and its roots in Old Testament prophecy but shows it is a people of God, composed of believing Jews and Gentiles, in which Jews may find the fulfillment of Judaism, and Gentiles are not required to become Jews."
- The Jerusalem Council resolved the issue by agreeing that Gentiles did not need to be circumcised but asked them to abstain from certain practices to avoid alienating Jewish Christians (food sacrificed to idols, meat not slaughtered Jewishly, and sexual immorality).
- "The fundamental point that was accepted was that the Gentiles did not need to be circumcised. At the same time, however, they were asked to avoid alienating their Jewish colleagues by abstaining from food, sacrifice to idols, and from meat not slaughtered in the Jewish manner, and by observing Jewish standards of sexual behavior."
- Luke also chronicles the increasing rejection of the gospel by the Jews, leading to Paul and Barnabas explicitly turning their focus to the Gentiles after initial rejection in synagogues (Acts 13:46, 28:25-28).
- "Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying it was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you, but since you thrust aside and judged yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles." (Acts 13:46)
- Interestingly, Acts lacks the prominent references to the divine judgment upon Jerusalem found in Luke's Gospel, possibly because Acts focuses on the condemnation of official Judaism for rejecting the gospel.

3. Church Life and Organization:

- Luke aims to provide a picture of the early church's life and worship as a pattern for guidance. This includes small groups meeting for teaching, fellowship, prayer, and the breaking of bread.

- "Luke is concerned to offer a picture of the life and worship of the church, no doubt, as a pattern to provide guidance for his own time."
- Entrance into the church is through baptism with water, and the Holy Spirit is emphasized as the common possession of all Christians, the source of joy and power, and the guide for leaders and evangelistic activity. Acts is even described as "the book of the Acts of the Holy Spirit."
- Leadership initially resided with the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, with Jerusalem holding a significant place for other emerging churches. Local churches also had elders, and prophets and teachers played important roles (some resident, some itinerant).
- Luke doesn't detail the appointment processes for all leaders but highlights the importance of spiritual qualities and the Spirit's guidance in appointments (e.g., replacing Judas, choosing the seven assistants, Paul appointing elders).
- "This is sufficient evidence to show that for Luke, the significant factors were the spiritual qualities of the persons chosen and the guidance of the spirit in the meetings that appointed them."
- Missionary work was characterized by teamwork (usually groups of three or more), with Paul spending significant time in key population centers rather than just conducting brief visits.
- Luke records various sermons and speeches tailored to different audiences (Jews, Greeks, cultured, uncultured), suggesting these are presented as models for evangelism.
- "The variety in these missionary sermons and the speeches of Acts on trial before Jewish and Roman bodies is no doubt meant to illustrate the different ways in which the gospel was presented to different groups of people."
- Acts is considered an "edifying" book, intended to show Luke's contemporary Christians what it means to be the church and how to live according to the early church's pattern.
- "It is edifying, intended as it is to show the Christians of Luke's day what it means to be the church and how they should continue to live according to the pattern established in the early days."

- Luke structures his narrative around the parallel careers of Peter and Paul, drawing parallels between their lives and the life of Jesus, suggesting a divinely ordained pattern for the church and its missionaries.
- "What he's saying is Jesus' example in the gospel of Luke serves as a pattern for the lives of especially Peter, but especially Paul. And that this is divinely ordained and given to us for our instruction."

Conclusion:

Session 18 of Dr. Peterson's overview of Howard Marshall's commentary on the Theology of Luke-Acts reveals Luke's significant emphasis on the progress of the gospel amidst opposition, the crucial and often debated inclusion of Gentiles into God's people, and the presentation of the early church's life and organization as a guiding model for future Christians. Marshall's insights highlight Luke's theological agenda in portraying God's sovereign work in history and the practical implications for the church.

4. Study Guide: Peterson, Theology of Luke-Acts, Session 18, Marshall: Progress Despite Opposition, Inclusion

Study Guide: The Theology of Luke-Acts (Session 18 - Howard Marshall)

Key Themes:

- **Progress Despite Opposition:** Luke emphasizes the consistent advance of the gospel despite various forms of resistance.
- **Gentile Inclusion:** A central theme in Acts is the inclusion of Gentiles into the people of God, and the tensions and resolutions surrounding this.
- **Church Life and Organization:** Luke provides a picture of the early church's practices, worship, leadership, and missionary activities.

Quiz:

1. According to the lecture, what are the initial forms of opposition faced by the apostles in Jerusalem, as recorded in Acts?
2. How did Paul typically respond to opposition during his missionary journeys, and what does Luke highlight about his trials before Roman authorities?
3. What was the fundamental issue that caused tension within the early church regarding the inclusion of Gentiles?
4. Describe the two main scholarly views presented regarding Luke's understanding of the relationship between the early church and Judaism.
5. What was the resolution reached by the Jerusalem council concerning the requirements for Gentile converts?
6. What was Paul's general practice when entering a new city, and what shift occurred when the Jewish population rejected his message?
7. What significant event prominently featured in Luke's Gospel concerning Jerusalem is noticeably absent from the book of Acts, and what might be the reason for this omission?
8. Based on the early chapters of Acts, describe some key characteristics of the early church's communal life and worship.
9. What does the lecture suggest were the most significant factors Luke considered when describing the appointment of church leaders and missionaries?

10. How does the lecture characterize Luke's purpose in writing Acts, particularly concerning its relevance to his contemporary Christian audience?

Quiz Answer Key:

1. The initial opposition in Jerusalem began with the mockery of the apostles on the day of Pentecost and continued with attempts by the Sanhedrin to silence them about Jesus. This escalated to physical violence and imprisonment.
2. Paul often used opposition, including courtroom settings, as opportunities to proclaim the gospel rather than solely defending himself. Luke emphasizes that Roman authorities often found Paul innocent of any Roman law violations, yet political pressures and corruption sometimes prevented his release.
3. The fundamental issue was whether Gentile converts needed to adhere to Jewish law, including circumcision, to be considered part of God's people and have fellowship with Jewish Christians. This questioned whether the church was simply a branch of Judaism or a distinct entity.
4. One view is that Luke saw the church as essentially a Jewish institution to which believing Gentiles could be joined. The other view is that Luke saw God's purpose as the creation of a new Israel composed of both Jews and Gentiles, depicting a gradual separation from Judaism.
5. The Jerusalem council concluded that Gentile converts did not need to be circumcised. However, they were asked to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, meat not slaughtered in the Jewish manner, and sexual immorality to avoid unnecessarily offending their Jewish brethren.
6. Paul's regular practice was to begin his mission by preaching in the local synagogue to the Jewish community first. When the Jews rejected the gospel, Paul and his companions would then turn their focus and evangelistic efforts toward the Gentiles.
7. The prominent event absent from Acts is the detailed prediction and account of the divine judgment and destruction of Jerusalem, which is emphasized in Luke's Gospel. This absence might be because Acts focuses on the condemnation of official Judaism for rejecting the gospel, rather than the city itself, which was the birthplace of the church.
8. The early church was characterized by small groups meeting for teaching, fellowship, prayer, and the breaking of bread. Entrance was through baptism, and

the Holy Spirit was considered a vital and common possession of all believers, providing joy and power.

9. Luke emphasized the spiritual qualities of the individuals chosen for leadership and missionary roles, as well as the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the meetings where these appointments were made. The specific procedures were not detailed, suggesting their lesser importance to Luke.
10. Luke's purpose in writing Acts was to provide an edifying account for the Christians of his time, showing them what it meant to be the church and how they should continue to live according to the patterns established in the early days by leaders like Peter and Paul, following the example of Jesus.

Essay Format Questions:

1. Analyze Luke's presentation of opposition in the book of Acts. What different forms of opposition are depicted, and what theological points does Luke seem to be making through these accounts?
2. Discuss the significance of Gentile inclusion in the theology of Luke-Acts. How does Luke portray this development, what challenges did it present to the early church, and how were these challenges addressed?
3. Compare and contrast the two main scholarly views regarding Luke's understanding of the relationship between the early church and Judaism. Which view do you find more compelling based on the provided excerpts, and why?
4. Examine Luke's portrayal of church life and organization in the early chapters of Acts. What aspects does he emphasize, and how might this have served as guidance for his intended audience?
5. Evaluate the claim that the life of Jesus, as presented in Luke's Gospel, serves as a pattern for the lives and ministries of Peter and Paul in Acts. Provide specific examples from the text to support your analysis.

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Sanhedrin:** The supreme council of the Jews in ancient Jerusalem.
- **Martyr:** A person who is killed because of their religious or other beliefs.
- **Gentiles:** Non-Jewish people.
- **Proselytes:** Gentiles who had converted to Judaism.
- **God-fearers:** Gentiles who were sympathetic to Judaism and observed some of its practices but had not fully converted (e.g., through circumcision for men).
- **Messiah:** The promised deliverer of the Jewish nation prophesied in the Hebrew Bible. Christians believe Jesus to be the Messiah.
- **Heresy:** A belief or opinion contrary to orthodox religious doctrine.
- **New Israel:** A theological concept referring to the Christian church as the spiritual successor to the nation of Israel, composed of both Jewish and Gentile believers.
- **Jerusalem Council:** A significant meeting in the early church (Acts 15) where apostles and elders addressed the issue of Gentile converts and the requirements of Jewish law.
- **Eschatological Discourse:** A section of Jesus' teachings in the Gospels concerning the end times, judgment, and the future.
- **Proto-Presbytery:** A gathering of elders, suggesting an early form of church leadership structure.
- **Edifying:** Instructive or improving morally or intellectually; in this context, intended to build up and encourage the Christian community.

5. FAQs on Peterson, Theology of Luke-Acts, Session 18, Marshall: Progress Despite Opposition, Inclusion, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on the Theology of Luke-Acts (Based on Peterson/Marshall)

1. How does Luke portray the spread of the gospel in the book of Acts in relation to opposition? Luke emphasizes that the progress of the gospel in Acts occurs *despite* significant opposition. He draws a parallel between Jesus' own ministry, which culminated in his death, and the challenges faced by his followers. This opposition manifests in various forms, from mockery and attempts by religious authorities to silence them, to persecution, imprisonment, and even martyrdom. Luke highlights that this reality was expected, as Jesus himself faced such trials.

2. What were the primary sources of opposition faced by the early Christians and missionaries according to Luke? The opposition to the early Christians and missionaries primarily originated from Jewish authorities who viewed the Christian message as a heresy, particularly the inclusion of Gentiles without strict adherence to Jewish law. This opposition often led to arrests, beatings, and attempts to prevent the spread of the gospel. Additionally, in the Roman world, Jewish groups sometimes incited pagan sympathizers to violence against the missionaries, leading to their appearance before Roman magistrates.

3. What was the Roman authorities' general attitude towards the early Christians and the charges brought against them? The Roman authorities' attitude towards the early Christians was ambivalent. At times, they were willing to administer swift justice against those who seemed to be causing public unrest. However, Luke also portrays Roman officials who appeared to be more concerned with upholding Roman law and order. In these instances, they sometimes recognized that the activities of the missionaries were not contrary to Roman law and custom. Luke's portrayal of Paul's captivity, for example, suggests that Roman governors were aware of Paul's innocence under Roman law but were sometimes swayed by political considerations or bribery.

4. How did the early Christians respond to the opposition they faced, as depicted in Acts? Despite facing considerable opposition, the early Christians in Acts responded with steadfast faith and a defiant commitment to spreading the gospel. When commanded to stop preaching, they refused. While they sometimes retreated from hostile environments, they continued to evangelize in new locations, adhering to Jesus' instructions. Furthermore, they used opportunities like court appearances not primarily for self-defense, but as platforms to bear witness to their faith. Luke also emphasizes that the "hand of God" was upon the missionaries, providing divine protection and ensuring the triumphant progress of the word despite the hardships.

5. What is the significance of Gentile inclusion in Luke's theology as presented in Acts? Gentile inclusion is a central theological theme in Acts. Luke portrays the expansion of the gospel beyond Jerusalem and Judea to Samaria and ultimately to the "end of the earth," signifying the inclusion of Gentiles into the people of God. This progression is depicted as divinely ordained and prophesied, not merely a result of human planning. Luke highlights the tensions this created within the early church, primarily concerning whether Gentile converts needed to adhere to Jewish law, particularly circumcision.

6. How did the early church address the challenges arising from the inclusion of Gentiles? The early church grappled with the implications of Gentile inclusion. The key issue was whether Gentile converts needed to become Jews (including circumcision and adherence to the Law of Moses) to be part of God's people. Luke shows how, through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Gentiles and the decisions made at the Jerusalem Council, the consensus emerged that Gentiles did not need to be circumcised. However, to foster unity, Gentiles were encouraged to abstain from certain practices that would offend Jewish Christians, such as food sacrificed to idols, meat not slaughtered in the Jewish manner, and certain sexual behaviors. While these regulations likely faded over time, they represent an early attempt to bridge the gap between Jewish and Gentile believers.

7. What does Luke reveal about the life and organization of the early church in Acts?

Luke provides glimpses into the early church's life and worship, seemingly as a model for his own time. He describes small groups meeting for teaching, fellowship, prayer, and the breaking of bread, with baptism as the entry point. The Holy Spirit is portrayed as vital, indwelling every Christian and empowering leaders for their roles. Leadership initially rested with the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, which held a significant position. Local churches also had elders, and prophets and teachers played important roles. Luke emphasizes the spiritual qualities of leaders and the Spirit's guidance in their selection. Missionary work was often conducted in teams, and sermons were adapted to different audiences.

8. How does Luke structure the narrative of Acts, and what is the overarching purpose of this structure?

Luke structures the narrative of Acts around the ministries of the two prominent apostles, Peter and Paul, highlighting interesting parallels between them and even drawing parallels between the life of Jesus and Paul. This structure serves to demonstrate a divinely ordained pattern for the life of the church and its missionaries, rooted in the example of Jesus. The overarching purpose of Acts, according to this perspective, is edification—to show Christians of Luke's day what it means to be the church and how they should live according to the patterns established in the early days, emphasizing progress despite opposition, the inclusion of Gentiles, and the Spirit-filled life and organization of the community.