

THE STORY OF JESUS' RULE

Acts 1:1-11

Every Bible (that I know of) labels the book of Acts as “the Acts of the Apostles”, giving readers the impression that it offers a historical record of the apostles’ activities in the years following Jesus’ death and resurrection. While true, that impression fails to grasp the fuller picture Luke carefully composed in the book. Acts gives to its readers far more than merely a historical account of the early church’s activities; it uses that historical account to narrate the reality of Jesus’ kingdom in the world and what it means to live under his rule. It thus offers a story that forms the context for every Christian’s life. Consider, therefore, a few features of Act’s story.

Their story is our story

- Acts opens by recording Jesus giving his church an important mission and empowering it to accomplish its task (*Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:1-11; 2:1-41*).
- That opening scene echoes Israel’s story by narrating people graciously and mercifully chosen by God to represent His message of grace and mercy to the world (*Acts 1:1-11; cf. 1 Peter 2:9; Exodus 19:5-6; Matthew 28:18-20*).
- Acts, at the same time, moves that story forward by modeling what it looks like to live under Jesus’ sovereign rule so that the church can envision its place in the world in ways that maintains continuity with its history while also representing the new reality Jesus’ exalted identity brought into the world.
- Luke’s record reveals that the church needs to adopt new ways of thinking and living in the world in order to fulfill its mission (*Acts 2:42-47; 10-11; 15*).
- The church’s new ways of thinking and living, ways adopted because they represent Jesus’ rule, will solicit the world’s resistance and persecution (*Acts 7-8*).
- The transformed lives of individual Christians and of the church community offer compelling testimony to the truth of its message (i.e. Peter, Paul, etc.).

Applications

- We have to know the Bible’s story; its story is the message.
- As followers of Jesus, we have to redefine our lives in terms of the Bible’s story; we have to see ourselves as participants in its ongoing narrative.
- Because we belong to the Bible’s ongoing story, we are not alone.

The story of the church’s origins in Acts presents the first chapter on an ongoing story in which we participate. Acts’ account thus gives us encouragement because it demonstrates the realities of Jesus’ sovereign rule over his church and over our lives. That encouragement, however, ought to compel us to commit ourselves to faithfully representing Jesus’ rule in the world around us.