

God's Sovereignty In Acts

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The book of Acts is a wonderfully written book but we would expect nothing less from its author, Luke. One can read the book of Acts through several times and as they keep reading, they will see new things every time. The book is that rich.

There are a handful of main characters in Acts but mostly the book focuses on Peter and Paul who appear in different sections of the book. But we cannot escape the fact that Acts focuses on God Himself. Luke draws attention to the continuing work of God especially as it pertains to His saving work in the newly inaugurated kingdom of God under Jesus Christ. God is seen as being behind the events that unfold in Acts. This can be seen in the idea of something had to happen or was necessary because it was part of God's plan. In fact, the idea is found over 20 times in Acts.

For example, we read, "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus." (Acts 1:16.) Here we have Peter beginning the process of selecting a replacement for Judas because the Scripture had to be fulfilled. While in Thessalonica, Paul also used the same sort of terminology in Acts 17: 2-3, "And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ." This was Paul's custom as he went from place to place. He began with the Jews and tried to show them why it was necessary for Jesus to do what He did. God had a plan that had to be carried out and both Peter and Paul were keen to point this out.

The sovereignty of God is especially made clear regarding the death and resurrection of Jesus. In the very first gospel sermon on Pentecost, Peter proclaimed, "this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it." (Acts 2:23-24.) God had a plan that involved Jesus dying and raising from the dead. And later in the very same sermon, Jesus is exalted to the right hand of God by God Himself. Because God had a plan, it had to be carried out so the remission of sins could be granted to repentant, baptized believers fulfilling the promise God made to Abraham (Acts 2:38-39.)

And Paul did the same thing in his sermons. We have one recorded in chapter 13:16-47. Right in the middle of that sermon, Paul pointed out that the Jewish leaders didn't recognize Jesus. They were blind to the Scriptures, and although He was innocent, they had Him killed (Acts 13:27-28.) But, in their ignorance, they actually fulfilled the Scriptures by having Him killed. We read, "And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead" (Acts 13:29-30.) None of this lets the Jews off the hook but it does say that God carried out His plan. He had to.

And it is of great value for us today for it offers a basis of our faith that God had a plan He carried out. He was working out the salvation of souls in Acts and that work is ongoing. It should spur us to get on with the work because it is His work.