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*Imprecatory Speech-Acts in the Book of Acts*

**Abstract**

Theologies of prayer in Acts have long neglected imprecatory prayers or curses as integral to the theological agenda of Luke. This article seeks to survey the instances of imprecations in Acts to determine how they function as speech-acts. The article makes two conclusions about imprecations in Acts based on the survey. First, imprecations identify the true People of God in the midst of competing claims. Second, imprecations reveal how one can participate in the salvific work of God.

KEYWORDS: prayer, curse, imprecatory, imprecation, Luke, Acts, People of God, salvation

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Imprecatory prayers are not unique to the Judeo-Christian scripture and are commonly defined as a prayer of cursing so that evil would befall another person.<sup>1</sup> They are challenging for the Christian tradition on several levels. While imprecations have long been recognized as existing in the New Testament, they are rarely integrated into biblical theologies of prayer on either a text or canonical level. With regard to the book of Acts it is particularly true that theologies of prayer lack interaction with imprecations. If cursing or imprecations are discussed it is not always clear what they are accomplishing or how they function in the larger narrative framework.<sup>2</sup>

There are several approaches to dealing with the problem of imprecations in the New Testament. One approach places imprecations under a rubric of the changes within the epochs in salvation history. Specifically, imprecatory prayers (especially those in the Psalms) are dismissed vis-à-vis a relegation of them to the economy of the Mosaic Law. Alternatively, when imprecatory prayers are considered within the New Testament the focus is heavily weighted on their role in the book of Revelation as a future event. The emphasis on their role in the past or the future may be partially to blame for the lack of attention given to them in Lukan studies.<sup>3</sup>

The methodology used in this study involves three distinct criteria. The first criterion is that an imprecatory prayer must be an invocation that is addressed or directed to God.<sup>4</sup> The second criterion is that New Testament imprecations do not necessarily have to contain a high level of specificity about how the curse will be carried out. Imprecations may contain explicit prayers or quotations of them but they can also contain curse elements such as a hypothetical situation.<sup>5</sup> Another criterion seeks to detect imprecations by noting where there is a withholding of intercession or blessing.<sup>6</sup>

This is problematic if it stands by itself because it is unsound to make conclusions about a speech-act based on silence or a lack of contrary evidence. It is possible that the withdrawing or withholding of something can contain an element of cursing, but only where an explicit statement is made along with it. The third and last criterion is that the invocation “must contain a request that one’s enemies or the enemies of Yahweh be judged and justly punished.”<sup>7</sup>

A perusal of secondary literature indicates that a lacuna exists in New Testament studies regarding imprecatory prayers and curses outside of Revelation. This study seeks to address this lacuna by asserting that not only

does the Book of Acts contain imprecatory speech-acts, but these imprecations contribute substantially to the author's theological agenda. Rather than creating an approach to New Testament imprecations that smoothes over unique theological contours, an imprecatory speech-act should be seen as performative language; it is *doing* something.

An important presupposition for this study is that Luke-Acts presents a progressive unfolding of the People of God who share in the history of redemption as begun in the Genesis narratives.<sup>8</sup> Those who would have read/heard the imprecations of Acts would have heard it within this co-text as well as within the context of the life of the newly established church. Acts is not only the second volume that follows the gospel of Luke; it is also a continuation of God's revelation in the same vein as God's covenant history.

When we speak of Luke doing something with imprecations as speech-acts we mean that the author of Acts uses imprecatory speech-acts as a means of establishing the identity of the true people of God. The thesis presented here is in concert with what has already been established in Acts but seeks to make a modest adjustment by applying it to imprecations or curses. With regard to salvation in Acts, imprecations are "1) a means by which God's aim is disclosed and discerned, and 2) the means by which people get in sync with and participate in what God is doing."<sup>9</sup>

## II. Peter's Curse of Judas in Acts 1:20

The first imprecatory speech-act is a "curse"<sup>10</sup> that occurs almost immediately in the narrative as Peter recounts the fulfillment of Scripture in the betrayal of Judas in Acts 1:20. The two imprecations are quoted from the Psalms: Psalms 69:25 (68:26 LXX) is quoted as, "May his camp become desolate and let there be no one to dwell in it" and Ps 109:8 (Ps 108:8 LXX) is quoted as, "Let another take his office."<sup>11</sup> There are some variations from the LXX but they are minor in scope.<sup>12</sup> The quotation of Ps 68:26 is modified from the plural "may their camp be a desolation" (αὐτῶν) to the singular in application to Judas, "may his camp become desolate" (αὐτοῦ). When quoting from Ps 109:8, Luke uses the imperative (λαβέτω) over the LXX's optative (λαβοι).<sup>13</sup> This imperative is significant because it reflects the Koine style of imprecation.<sup>14</sup>

This curse is significant because it begins a pattern of imprecatory speech-acts that are integral to key texts that support the narrative. Joel Green notes that Judas recalls the Genesis narrative of the "earlier Judas" or Judah who sells his brother (Gen 37:27) in parallel to the way Judas sells Jesus.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the imprecation functions as the link in the narrative that creates continuity with the story of Israel.

This narrative could be described as negative because it uses a curse to identify who is not of the true People of God. The curse functions as an

identifier of those who are true People of God because those “who reject God’s salvation align themselves with Judas and turn aside from their heritage with the twelve tribes of Israel.”<sup>16</sup> But it could also be described as positive inasmuch that it creates a void of blessing and a sense of anticipation in the narrative with the curse of desolation and indigence. This will soon be contrasted and the void met by the “times of refreshing” (3:20) where there will be blessing instead of cursing for those who follow Jesus.

It seems almost irrational to curse Judas after his death, but as Witherington points out, this is not about Judas’ death per se but about the fulfillment of Scripture in replacing him.<sup>17</sup> But *contra* Witherington, it does not seem to be that an *apologetic* for Judas’ death is being presented by citing the Old Testament imprecations.<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, if the imprecations from the Old Testament are really a “warrant”<sup>19</sup> for appointing a replacement, their brevity, especially the second quotation, seems to make them rather weak. To see no warrant in the second citation would certainly be an overstatement but it also is an overstatement to understand these speech-acts as primarily a *defense* of his replacement. It is better to see this as an imprecatory declaration against Judas who betrayed the Son of Man (Lk 22:47; compare Matt 26:24; Mk 14:21).

Reading the curse as a part of the author’s process of creating a theological unit produces different results than reading it as a *defense* of replacing Judas. What the author of Acts is doing is using an imprecatory speech-act to highlight what God is doing in revealing who the true people of God are. Klauck describes this theologically as the creation of the “kernel of the first community” who would be “guaranteeing and handing on to future generations everything that had happened from the baptism of Jesus until his apparitions after Easter.”<sup>20</sup> Kurzinger argues in line with the thesis that the identity of the true people of God is involved, stating that Judas is “a representative of all the enemies of the Kingdom of God.”<sup>21</sup>

This account functions beyond that of proof or defense, it is part of a developing ecclesiology. The purpose of the *ex post facto* imprecation is to highlight that it is God who has made Judas’ habitation desolate and God who has said that another must take his place. This reading can be supported by the emphasis placed on explaining the casting of lots. Although there are textual variants for v.24 (προσευξάμενοι ἔλεον [they prayed and said] ~ προσευξάμενος ἔλεον [he prayed and said]) that indicate that Peter may have acted alone in praying, both variants locate the ultimate result upon God’s choice.<sup>22</sup>

### III. Peter’s Curse of Simon The Sorcerer In Acts 8:20

A second imprecatory curse in Acts occurs when Peter responds to Simon the Sorcerer’s desire to purchase the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>23</sup> Some have



argued that this is the only genuine instance of imprecation in the Lukan corpora.<sup>24</sup> Peter's curse in 8:20 states, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money." The fact that the optative mood is used supports the classification of imprecation: "may it be to destruction!" (εἴη εἰς ἀπώλειαν).<sup>25</sup> The Greek construction in verse 22 "if it is possible" (εἰ ἄρα ἀφεθήσεται) is conditional but the use of *ara* indicates a strengthened doubtfulness about his repentance.<sup>26</sup>

A lexical parallel with the earlier imprecation against Judas likely demonstrates a parallel theological intention.<sup>27</sup> In Acts 1:17 Peter states that Judas had previously received a "share (κλῆρον) in this ministry." Peter uses similar language against Simon in 8:21 by declaring that, "you have neither part nor lot (κλῆρος) in this matter." In both cases the theological issue at stake is participating and sharing in what God is doing.

The imprecation indicates continuity with the Old Testament model of justice and supports Day's thesis that New Testament imprecations and curses are theologically rooted in the Torah's principle of *lex talionis* (Deut 19:16-21) and ultimately the Abrahamic Covenant's parallelism of blessing and cursing (Gen 12:2-3).<sup>28</sup> Day also notes that conditionality reflects the theological tradition of imprecations in the Psalms.<sup>29</sup> However, Day's thesis must be held with qualification. The principle of *lex talionis* and the parallelism of conditional blessing can only be connected to Deuteronomy and perhaps the Psalms vis-à-vis broad literary patterns. Nevertheless, the conditional nature of the imprecations is arguably a faint echo of the Old Testament pattern of cursing and blessing that Luke would have been drawing from.

In verse 20 it is clear that it is because (ὅτι) Simon's action involved both the "gift of God" (the Holy Spirit) and money that his punishment will consist of destruction of himself and his silver. Of course, his punishment would be just if it simply involved Simon himself, but Peter's indication that his silver should also perish indicates an intention to demonstrate parity between the sin and its punishment.

The conditionality of the imprecation raises the issue of continuity and discontinuity with the first imprecation in Acts 1:20. Whereas the first imprecation in Acts 1:20 was unconditional, it is also given *ex post facto*, this is the first imprecation that is conditional (8:22) and it is the first spoken against one who is living. Because the first imprecation was against Judas, who was already dead there was no need for any conditionality. For this reason, it would not be proper to see conditionality as a criterion that would set this apart from the first imprecatory speech-act. The fact that the ultimate fate of Simon is nebulous points to an authorial intention that prioritizes the need for the reader/listener to repent over giving a history of Simon *per se*.<sup>30</sup>

The introduction of a tradition of conditional imprecation highlights its theological use: God is drawing men to himself through the preaching of

the gospel but he requires that their hearts be right with God (v.21) and they repent (v.22). The imprecation is the means by which Luke can draw attention to God's aim while demonstrating how a person can enter into what God is doing. Within the flow of narrative in chapters 8-11 this curse against Simon the Sorcerer is crucial to the larger context "that articulates God's initiatives in enlarging the community and the believers' reactions."<sup>31</sup>

#### IV. Paul's Curse of Elymas the Magician in Acts 13:10-11

A commonly cited passage from Acts that reflects imprecatory language or a curse is 13:10-11.<sup>32</sup> Parson cites this particular passage when he states, "In certain rare cases it may be acceptable for believers today to pray for God to defeat those who oppose his Kingdom's work – if they do not repent."<sup>33</sup>

In this passage, the author recounts how Paul (Saul) addressed Elymas the magician who was a "Jewish false prophet" (13:6). Paul's imprecatory statement in 13:10-11 should be understood as containing both the declaration of Elymas' true identity as well as the curse: "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? [11] And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time."

Dibelius states that this curse and accompanying miracle has one "effect: the proconsul confesses belief in Christ."<sup>34</sup> But this narrative accomplishes more than the goal of pointing to the reason for the proconsul's confession of faith. Another intention behind this narrative is to demonstrate the Holy Spirit's power to identify who is a member of the true People of God. As Squires states, this speech draws lines "between the devil and the Spirit-filled agents of God."<sup>35</sup> The use of the names Bar-Jesus and Elymas for the same individual is indicative that there is a need to prove who is truly an agent of God. As a Jew, Elymas would have known the laws against magic in Deut 18:9-14 – an act that would have brought about covenant curses upon Israel.<sup>36</sup> The one who claims to be a son of Jesus/Joshua (13:6) is revealed by means of the imprecation to be a "son of the devil."<sup>37</sup>

The phrase "hand of the Lord" in verse 11 is a distinctly Lukan expression that is used elsewhere in passages such as the creation of the world (7:50) and the growth of the church at Antioch (11:21).<sup>38</sup> This anthropomorphism is a common Septuagintal way of expressing "God's action in history" and is connected with the divine plan and purpose in Isa 14:24-7.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the very words of the imprecation are closely linked with the divine hand that reveals the purpose and will of God. To the reader/hearer in the ancient milieu the narrative would be compelling; those who desire to participate in God's salvific actions must believe.<sup>40</sup>

### V. Paul's Curse of Ananias in Acts 23:3

The next imprecation in Acts is from Paul against the high priest Ananias during his standing before the Sanhedrin (23:3).<sup>41</sup> Whereas earlier Paul addressed the people in Aramaic (21:40; 22:2), here he delivers his imprecation in Greek for the benefit of the Roman commander.<sup>42</sup> Marshall notes his agreement with Haenchen that this account functions in the narrative to demonstrate that Paul was unlikely to get justice from the Sanhedrin.<sup>43</sup> His interjection, “God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall!” begins with the infinitive *τυπτεῖν* for emphasis and does indicate indignation, but this alone is insufficient as a description of the speech-act.<sup>44</sup> The force of this Greek construction (*τυπτεῖν σε μέλλει ὁ θεός*) makes a compelling case to side with Laney and Marshall in calling this an imprecation or curse.<sup>45</sup> Conzelmann cites this as an instance of a curse-formula (*Φλυχθηφορμὲλ*).<sup>46</sup>

In addition, Paul is probably alluding in part to the covenant curses (Deut 28:22) where God will strike Israel for their disobedience.<sup>47</sup>

The rest of Paul's rhetorical question for Ananias reinforces the thesis that the imprecations of Luke-Acts function as a marker of the true People of God over and against those who claim to be but demonstrate otherwise. His question in v3, “Are you sitting to judge me according to the law, and yet contrary to the law you order me to be struck?” is designed to illustrate the hypocrisy and false nature of Ananias' religion – he is really a lawbreaker. It has been argued that Paul's proclaimed ignorance of Ananias' office as high priest in v5 (I did not know, brothers, that he was the high priest) as being an ironic statement, perhaps proving that Paul does not even recognize him as a Jew.<sup>48</sup> But this seems unsupportable from the text and as Willimon points out, he addresses the council as “brothers” (23:1).<sup>49</sup> Thus, it seems best to understand that Paul was truly ignorant of Ananias' office.

More important is Paul's next statement after those standing near him question his interjection in v 4. He responds in v 5, “I did not know, brothers, that he was the high priest, for it is written, ‘You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.’” This is a quotation from Exodus 22:28 (22:27 LXX), “You shall not revile God nor curse a ruler of your people.” The Hebrew word אָדָר is the same word used in the prohibition against cursing one's parents (Exo 21:17).<sup>50</sup> Whether Paul's words were prophetic or not of Ananias' impending death, it is clear that he understood himself as declaring or praying that God would or will strike him.<sup>51</sup>

This imprecation is distinctive in that it contains as a specific declaration that God would or will strike Ananias.<sup>52</sup> Clearly, God is the one who will revenge the injustice done to Paul. Although Paul rescinds his comment, the imprecation retains its ability to define those who are truly of God. It demonstrates that the leader of the Sanhedrin, who would represent the whole group's claim to be true Israelites and mediators of God's justice, was

really a “whitewashed wall,” an enemy of the true People of God. Barclay thinks that this refers to the whitewashed wall of a tomb that made one ceremonially unclean (Num 6:11, 19:11).<sup>53</sup> Thus, Paul is describing the high priest as unclean. Marshall thinks that this is an echo of Ezekiel 13:10-14 and 22:28 that uses whitewash as a metaphor for a false support applied to wall structure, demonstrating that the high priest is subject to sudden failure.<sup>54</sup>

The reference to God striking Ananias in Acts 23:3 certainly makes Marshall’s case stronger. A faint literary echo from the covenant curses of Deuteronomy 28:22 “the LORD will strike you” (πατάξει σε κύριος) can be seen in Paul’s imprecation of Acts 23:3 “God is going to strike you” (τύπτειν σε μέλλει ὁ θεός).

The explanatory aside in Acts 23:8 is evidence that this imprecation is part of a wider intention to disclose God’s aim of defining the true People of God.<sup>55</sup> The reader of Luke’s two volume work would already have read that the Sadducees deny the resurrection (Luke 20:27), and this fact is reiterated here because of its implications for the cornerstone doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus.<sup>56</sup>

## VI. Paul’s Curse of Israel in Acts 28:25-28

The *questio vexata* regarding Acts 28:25-28 is determining what Paul is doing or what act he is performing when he quotes Isa 6:9-10. Mills argues that this is “stern rebuke” intended to “place blame directly on the nation” of Israel.<sup>57</sup> However, he also states that this rebuke “ends in judgment on Israel.”<sup>58</sup> Bock cites this text as serving “to explain how Israelite unbelief should not be a surprise but reflects a divine pattern of either Israel’s or humanity’s response to God.”<sup>59</sup>

Lincoln cites this passage as primarily a text to justify Paul’s “decision to turn from the Jews to the Gentiles.”<sup>60</sup> Bruce states that Luke is using Isaiah prophetically.<sup>61</sup> Lastly, Lüdemann avers that Luke uses Isaiah to give assurance that the gospel is going to the Gentiles.<sup>62</sup> None of these descriptions (rebuke, explanation, justification, adumbration, assurance) seems completely adequate to describe Paul’s speech-act in quoting Isaiah.

Another way of describing Paul’s speech-act is a curse, which is the same description that Calvin gave of the text of Isaiah.<sup>63</sup> Marshall approximates this view when he states that Paul is uttering the words “as a condemnation.”<sup>64</sup> Yet, Pao notes that in the LXX the use of *ga.r* in Isa 6:9 shifts the focus away from God as the agent of condemnation and tones down the force – and this minor emendation is kept in the quotation in Acts 28:26-27.<sup>65</sup> While the tone of the LXX is retained, the quotation should be understood as climatic in the narrative.

At this climactic point in Acts 28:25, Paul states those Israelites who heard his speech are identical to the Israelites, “our fathers” (πατέρας ὑμῶν), who



fell under the covenant curses of Isaiah. Haenchen notes that parallel passages that cite Isa 6:9f demonstrate that the Hellenistic community understood such speech-acts “purely as God’s judgment of rejection.”<sup>66</sup>

The location of this speech in the narrative is crucial to understanding what Paul is doing with this Isaianic quotation. At points in the narrative, there are indications that the Sadducees were more hostile than the Pharisees were. Such an intention may be present in passages such as Acts 5:17 where Luke clearly labels the high priest and the Sadducees as those who were filled with the most jealousy. Likewise, Acts 23:8 shows the Pharisees in a more favorable light because they acknowledge the resurrection, angels, and spirits. The fact that earlier passages make the division between Pharisees and Sadducees explicit may give significance to the fact that the context of the imprecation in Acts 28 does not specify which party is in view.<sup>67</sup>

This particular speech in Acts 28 complements the imprecation against Judas in Acts 1:20.<sup>68</sup> The use of the imprecation in Acts 1:20 and in Acts 28:25-28 both function as points in the narrative that reveal the will of God and establish how one can participate in God’s creation of the faithful community. Whereas the imprecation in Acts 1:20 used the casting of lots to make explicit the sovereign working of God, the imprecation in Acts 28:25-28 comes at the climax of the narrative which began with the invocation “let the will of the Lord be done.”<sup>69</sup> This is the point where a definitive identification is made of whether the Jews would constitute the people of God en masse.

## VII. Conclusion

This study posited the thesis that imprecatory speech-acts or prayers are a means of establishing the true People of God. The imprecations display God’s will to identify those who belong to his people but also to establish how those who read/hear can enter into God’s salvific actions. One important conclusion established by this study is that imprecations are only spoken against those who have some connection to the nation of Israel or the church: Acts 1:16 identifies Judas as the disciple who was connected with Jesus, Acts 8:13 identifies Simon as one who believed, Acts 13:6 identifies Elymas the magician as a Jewish false prophet, Acts 23:3 identifies Ananias as one knowing the law of God, and Acts 28:19 identifies those who fall under the curse as being Jews. During this epoch of transition, there is a need to determine whether those who claim to be true descendents of the People of God through Israel truly are and whether those who claim to be members of the church truly are. This conclusion supports the thesis that imprecatory prayers or curses function as a way to establish identity. Imprecatory prayers are never spoken randomly against Gentiles or against those who are easily identified as being apart from Israel or the Church.

The conclusion that all the imprecations in Acts are against those who need to be distinguished from the true People of God is relevant to the second conclusion that the imprecations are the means by which people can understand how to participate in God's salvific actions. Even in the unusual case of imprecation *ex post facto* in Acts 1:20-21 it is clear that God's sovereign choice of Judas' replacement comes from among those who have been faithful in the presence of Jesus. Similarly, the offer to participate in God's salvific work is explicit in the conditional imprecation in Acts 8:20. In Acts 13, the imprecation against Elymas highlights the need for one to believe (Acts 13:12). In Acts 23, Paul's imprecation against the high-priest Ananias highlights the fact that the religious authorities cannot be perceived as being part of the true People of God due to their hypocrisy. Lastly, the imprecation in Acts 28 reveals that God requires belief (28:24) but also ears that hear and hearts that understand (28:26-27). In every instance of cursing, the reader/listener is able to understand what is required in order to participate in God's salvation and establishment of the true People of God. This conclusion also finds continuity with the theology of the imprecations of the Psalms that portray the enemies of God in "moral terms" and not in "personal terms."<sup>70</sup>

The text of Acts itself presents a challenge to the integration of imprecations in Acts into a mature biblical theology. Many interpret the ministry of Jesus and the subsequent ministry of the Church in Acts as defined solely in terms of its proleptic view to the future when retribution and judgment will come. As Michael Goheen reminds us, Jesus stops reading Isaiah 61:2 after he proclaims the favorable years of the Lord, but he does not continue on to announce a day of vengeance.<sup>71</sup> But while Goheen asserts that Jesus' ministry is one "in which vengeance has been superseded,"<sup>72</sup> it is not clear that this is sufficient in light of Max Turner's assertion that "the Messiah is to complete the task of cleansing the nation and bringing judgment on those that resist (Lk. 3:17)."<sup>73</sup> What this study adds to the conversation between Goheen and Turner is a picture of a developing People of God where identification is critical. The book of Acts depicts a time of transition and does not depict a view of cursing that is contrary to Paul's imperative against cursing (Rom 12:14). A mature biblical theology of Acts must seek to integrate imprecatory prayers in a manner that does justice to their role and function in revealing God's purposes and disclosing how the reader/listener can participate in the salvific program that has been opened to both Jews and Gentiles.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> For a definition along these lines see: E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Nuer Religion* (NY: Oxford, 1956), 172.

<sup>2</sup> Following J. Carl Laney and Patrick Miller, I use the terms "curse" and "imprecation" interchangeably. J. Carl Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory



Psalms,” *BSac* 138 (1981): 36; Patrick Miller, *They Cried to the Lord: The Form and Theology of Biblical Prayer* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 106.

<sup>3</sup> “The cry of the martyred tribulation saints in Revelation 6:10 for God’s vengeance, while similar to the psalmist’s imprecations, is not applicable to the church age.” Laney, “A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms,” 36 n2. Emphasis mine.

<sup>4</sup> Laney, “A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms,” 36.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>6</sup> Robert L. Thomas, “The Imprecatory Prayers of the Apocalypse,” *BSac* 126 (1969): 129.

<sup>7</sup> Laney, “A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms,” 36; Patrick Miller, *They Cried to the Lord: The Form and Theology of Biblical Prayer* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 106.

<sup>8</sup> D. A. Carson and Doug Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd Ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 321.

<sup>9</sup> Bartholomew and Holt, *Reading Luke*, 360.

<sup>10</sup> Green, “Learning Theological Interpretation From Luke,” in *Reading Luke*, 67.

<sup>11</sup> All scripture quotations are from the ESV unless stated otherwise.

<sup>12</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *Septuagintal Midrash in the Speeches of Acts* (Marquette University Press, 2002), 14.

<sup>13</sup> James L. Boyer, “The Classification of Opatives: A Statistical Study,” *GTJ* 9 (1988): 132.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>15</sup> Green, “Learning Theological Interpretation From Luke,” 67 For comments on the Lukan emphasis on the Twelve see David Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 124.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>17</sup> Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 121.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>19</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, Revised (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 46.

<sup>20</sup> Klauck, *Magic and Paganism in Early Christianity*, 7.

<sup>21</sup> “Dieerste Psalmstelle, frei nach Gzitiert, ist nach dem atl Zusammenhang von dem verfolgten David auf seine Feinde (Plural!) bezogen, hier also erst mit Änderung in den singular auf Judas, alseinen vertreter aller Feinde des Gottesreiches, angewandt.

“Emphasis mine. Joseph Kurzinger, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Würzburg: Echter-Verlag, 1951), 2.

<sup>22</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2005), 47.

<sup>23</sup> An instance of an imprecation or curse (fluch) as noted by John N. Day, “The Imprecatory Psalms and Christian Ethics,” *BSac* 159 (2002): 184; Gerd Lüdemann, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2005), 118;

Gottfried Schille, *Die Apostelgeschichte des Lukas* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1983), 206; C. F. D. Moule, *Christ's Messengers: Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* (NY: Association Press, 1957), 36; I Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, (TNTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 159; Hans Conzelmann, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, (Tübingen: J.C.B Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1963), 55. Hans-Josef Klauck cites this as preaching in prophetic tones in Magic and Paganism in Early Christianity (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 22.

<sup>24</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 482 n88.

<sup>25</sup> James L. Boyer, "The Classification of Optatives: A Statistical Study," *GTJ* 9 (1988): 132; Martin Culy and Mikeal Parsons, *Acts: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2003), 157

<sup>26</sup> Witherington, *Acts*, 287 n30.

<sup>27</sup> Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2003), 138.

<sup>28</sup> Day, "The Imprecatory Psalms and Christian Ethics," 168.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 185 n53.

<sup>30</sup> Paul W. Walaskay, *Acts* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 83.

<sup>31</sup> Daniel Marguerat, "Saul's Conversion (Acts 9, 22, 26) and the Multiplication of Narrative in Acts "in *Luke's Literary Achievement: Collected Essays* (ed. C. M. Tuckett; JSNTSS 116; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1995), 140.

<sup>32</sup> Those who label this speech-act as imprecatory or a curse include: Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms," 36; Martin Dibelius, *The Book of Acts: Form, Style, and Theology* (ed. K. C. Hanson; 1956 reprint; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 42; Lüdemann, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 165; Conzelmann, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 74.

<sup>33</sup> Greg W. Parsons, "Guidelines for Understanding and Proclaiming the Psalms," *BSac* 147 (1990): 178 n52.

<sup>34</sup> Dibelius, *Acts*, 42.

<sup>35</sup> John T. Squires, *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts* (SNTSMS 76; New York/Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993), 101.

<sup>36</sup> Gaventa, *Acts*, 192.

<sup>37</sup> Lüdemann, *Acts*, 164.

<sup>38</sup> Squires, *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts*, 99.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 99 n109.

<sup>40</sup> Walaskay, *Acts*, 127

<sup>41</sup> An imprecatory passage according to Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms," 36.

<sup>42</sup> Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1990), 806.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 364.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas Ethelbert Page, *Acts of the Apostles: Explanatory Notes on the Greek Text* (Cambridge, UK: 1895), 230.

<sup>45</sup> Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms," 36; Marshall, *Acts*, 363.

<sup>46</sup> Conzelmann, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 127

<sup>47</sup> James Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 303.

<sup>48</sup> For a list of positions on this verse see Kistemaker, *Acts*, 810.

<sup>49</sup> William H. Willimon, *Acts* (Interpretation; Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1988), 171.

<sup>50</sup> Carol Meyers, *Exodus* (New Cambridge Bible Commentary; NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 200.

<sup>51</sup> John B. Polhill, *Acts* (NAC; Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1992), 467

<sup>52</sup> Contra Laney ("A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms," 36) who lists Acts 23:3 as containing a curse element but not a specific prayer that the judgment would be carried out.

<sup>53</sup> William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Louisville, KY: WJKP, 1976), 164.

<sup>54</sup> Marshall, *Acts*, 363.

<sup>55</sup> Steven M. Sheeley, *Narrative Asides in Luke-Acts* (JSNTSS 72; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 124.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>57</sup> Donald Mills, "The Use of Isaiah 6:9-10 in the New Testament with Special Attention to the Gospel of John," *JMAT* 4:2 (2000): 29.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 29

<sup>59</sup> D. L. Bock, "Old Testament in Acts" in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Development* (eds. Ralph Martin, et al.; Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1997), 824.

<sup>60</sup> A. T. Lincoln, "Pentecost," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Development* (eds. Ralph Martin, et al.; Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1997), 904.

<sup>61</sup> Bruce, *Acts*, 508.

<sup>62</sup> Lüdemann, *Acts*, 346.

<sup>63</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, III, xxiv, 13.

<sup>64</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1988), 184; Marshall, *Acts*, 421.

<sup>65</sup> David Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 102-3.

<sup>66</sup> Earnst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles* (trans. R. McL. Wilson; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 724 n1.

<sup>67</sup> Sheeley, *Narrative Asides in Luke-Acts*, 146.

<sup>68</sup> Dunn, *Acts*, 278.

<sup>69</sup> Squires, *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts*, 62.

<sup>70</sup> Miller, *They Cried to the Lord*, 107

<sup>71</sup> Michael Goheen, "A Critical Examination of David Bosch's Missional Reading of Luke," in *Reading Luke: Interpretation, Reflection, Formation* (eds. C. G. Bartholomew, et al.; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 67

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.

<sup>73</sup> Max Turner, "Luke and the Spirit," in *Reading Luke*, 271.