

OVERCOMING BARRIERS: SUFFERING, REJECTION AND MISSION IN LUKE-ACTS

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In a previous article, the parallel narratives of Saul and Ananias in Acts 9 and Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10, was explored to show how the church must struggle to overcome its own internal barriers in order to fulfill its mission as envisioned in Acts 1:8. This article builds on the findings of the past research and attempts to understand the role that suffering and rejection had in the mission of Jesus and those who faithfully took up the cross.

Key Words: Suffering, suffering servant, mission, rejection, Luke, Acts

1. The Son of Man Must Suffer

And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer (δεῖ παθεῖν) many things and be rejected (ἀποδοκιμασθῆναι) by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed (ἀποκτανθῆναι) and on the third day be raised to life" (Luke 9:22).

It was with these direct and striking words that Jesus forewarns His disciples that their eminent journey to Jerusalem will not be met with the joyful acceptance of a coronation, but with the terrible rejection of a crucifixion.

The journey narrative from Galilee to Jerusalem is a well-known framework that occupies the central portion of Luke's gospel and is often referred to as "the way" (ὁδός; see 9:57, 18:35, 19:36 and 24:32). The journey narrative formally begins in chap. 9:51 with the fateful words, "As the time approached for him to be taken up (ἀναλήμψεως) to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem."¹ The narrative ends with

¹ According to Parsons "this 'taking up' refers to the entire complex of events that forms Jesus' transit to the Father: his passion, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension/exaltation." Mikeal C. Parsons, "Isaiah 53 in Acts 8: A Reply to Professor

Jesus' words to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus: "Did not the Christ have to suffer (δεῖ παθεῖν) these things and then enter his glory?" (Luke 24:26), words that echo chap. 9:22. Jesus reveals the all-important Scriptural foundation for what had just taken place at Jerusalem. "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself" (Luke 24:27).² The appearance of Moses and Elijah on the mountain of transfiguration at the beginning of the journey to Jerusalem now may be recognized within Jesus' scriptural revelation at the end of His pilgrimage.³ Later on that same evening, Jesus repeats His instruction to the larger group of disciples gathered in the Upper Room and reminds the disciples that He has already told them *prior* to His death that these things would happen.⁴ "This is what I told you while I was still with you: 'Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.' Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, 'This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day'" (Luke 24:44-46).

Is there any evidence in Luke concerning which Old Testament Scriptures Jesus used in order to instruct the disciples about His impending fate? Table 1 contains a list of the direct Old Testament quotations in the book of Luke including the speaker/writer of the quote, and a brief content remark. The table shows that Luke has directly quoted the Old Testament seventeen times.

Four quotations refer to Jesus' early life, His birth (Luke 1:17; 2:23), His consecration at the Temple (2:24), and the coming of John the Baptist (3:4-6). Four quotations deal with the temptation in the wilderness (4:4, 8, 10, 12). Then follows Jesus' reference to Isa 61:1-2 and 58:6 in Luke 4:18-19, a section that is considered to be programmatic in Luke-Acts outlining the

Morna Hooker" in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant*, (ed. William H. Bellinger Jr. and William R. Farmer; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1998), 88.

- ² It should be noted that the dramatic events foretold in Luke 9:22 are further illuminated at the transfiguration where "two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure (ἔξοδον), which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem" (Luke 9:30, 31).
- ³ While the name Moses appears in both Scriptures, Elijah could be seen as standing as a representative of all the prophets in Luke 24:27. Peter seems to make the link between these two revelatory events when, talking of his own "departure" (ἔξοδον) in 2 Pet 1:15, where he closely binds together the glorious light he witnessed on the mountain with the "words of the prophets" which are like "a light shining in a dark place" (2 Pet 1:19).
- ⁴ It would seem logical here to survey the direct Old Testament quotations ascribed to Jesus in Luke as a primary source for this claim.

ministry of Jesus as a jubilee type of release ministry to those who are suffering.⁵

Speaker	Luke	OT	Content
Angel	Luke 1:17	Mal 4:5, 6	Elijah to turn the hearts.
Narrator	Luke 2:23	Exod 13:2	Consecrate the first-born.
Narrator	Luke 2:24	Lev 12:8	Offering of two young birds.
Narrator	Luke 3:4-6	Isa 40:3-5	Prepare the way of the Lord.
Jesus	Luke 4:4	Deut 8:3	Man does not live by bread alone.
Jesus	Luke 4:8	Deut 6:13	Worship only the Lord.
Jesus	Luke 4:10	Ps 91:11	Angels will guard your way.
Jesus	Luke 4:12	Deut 6:16	Do not put the Lord to the test.
Jesus	Luke 4:18, 19	Isa 61:1, 2	The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me.
Jesus	Luke 8:10	Isa 6:9-10	Speak in parables.
Lawyer	Luke 10:27	Deut 6:5 Lev 19:18	Love the Lord and neighbor.
Jesus	Luke 13:19	Ps 104:12	Birds nest in the branches.
Jesus Jesus Jesus Jesus Peter	Luke 20:17 Matt 21:42 Mark 12:10 Acts 4:11 1Pet 2:7	Ps 118:22	The stone the builders have rejected has become the capstone.
Jesus	Luke 20:37	Exod 3:6 Exod 3:15	Moses at the burning bush.
Jesus	Luke 20:42, 43	Ps 110:1	Sit at My right hand, enemies footstool.
Jesus	Luke 22:37	Isa 53:12	Numbered with the transgressors.
Jesus	Luke 23:46	Ps 31:5	I commit My spirit into Your hands.

Table 1: Direct Old Testament Quotations in Luke

⁵ For a major article on the subject see F. Neiryck, "Luke 4:16-30 and the Unity of Luke-Acts" in *The Unity of Luke-Acts* (ed. Verheden; Lueven-Louvain, Belgium: Lueven University Press, 1999). He states that "there are a number of good reasons to justify the choice of Lk 4:16-30, widely held to be programmatic for Luke-Acts" (p. 357). The major reason given by Neiryck is that a number of themes introduced in Luke 4:16-30 reappear a number of times throughout Acts.

Three further quotations follow, dealing with Jesus' specific use of parables (Luke 8:10), the well-known instruction to loving the neighbor (10:27), and the birds nesting in the branches of the mustard seed (Luke 13:19). Luke 20:17, quoting Ps 118:22 and speaking of the stone that the builders have rejected, seems to be an important verse within the concept of suffering. Then a reference to Moses at the burning bush addresses the question about resurrection (Luke 20:37) followed by a quote from David's enthronement Psalm (Ps 110:1) about his Lord who will sit down at "the right hand" of the Lord to rule the enemies (Luke 20:42-43). Luke 22:37 may be seen as a most important verse, for it is the only time that Jesus quotes from the Suffering Servant motif text of Isa 53:12. The last quotation reiterates Ps 31:5 as Jesus, in the moment of His death on the cross, commits Himself to His Father (Luke 23:46).

As the table above has shown, there is only one direct quotation in Luke where Jesus tells His disciples that His suffering and death is a fulfillment of the Scriptures: "It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors'; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment" (Luke 22:37).⁶

2. The Son of Man Must Be Rejected

In addition to the single text about Jesus' suffering taken from Isa 53, there is one other Scripture that Jesus quotes from the Psalms in direct relation to His death. When the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders⁷ come and question His authority, Jesus asks them about John the Baptist's authority and tells the parable of the stewards who kill the heir of the vineyard (Luke 20:9-16). He then cites Ps 118:22, "Then what is the meaning of that which is written: 'The stone the builders rejected (*ἀπεδοκίμασαν*) has become the capstone?'" (Luke 20:17).⁸ The irony of the verse suggests that the stone that had been rejected by the "builders" is ultimately been put in its rightful place by "the Lord" (Ps 118:23). Instead of gaining ownership of the vineyard, the wicked tenants themselves are rejected and the land is given "to others" (Luke 20:16). Although this parable stops short of proclaiming the resurrection of the son who had been killed by the tenants, Luke 9:22 specifically alludes to it

⁶ For a broad ranging discussion of the Suffering Servant motif see William H. Bellinger Jr. and William R. Farmer, eds., *Jesus and the Suffering Servant* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1998).

⁷ These are the same three authorities which Jesus first foretold would reject Him in Luke 9:22.

⁸ It is important to note here that the LXX uses the exact same word for rejection here.

through the use of a parallel structure shown below. Although the son is rejected by the builders, by wicked tenants, and ultimately by Jewish officials, Jesus predicts that He will be raised to life:

“The Son of Man
 must suffer many things and
 be rejected
 by the elders, chief priests,
 and teachers of the law, and
 He
 must be killed
 and on the third day be raised to life.”⁹

This rejection then acceptance of the Son of Man had already taken place at the very beginning of His ministry.¹⁰ After being “accepted” by God through the Father’s declaration at the baptism (Luke 3:22), Jesus proves his moral worth by withstanding three temptations in the wilderness (4:1-13).¹¹ Returning from the wilderness in the “power of the Spirit” (v. 14), Jesus enters the synagogue in Nazareth and declares, “the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me” (v. 18).

In an earlier article I argued that the prophetic time element carried over from Daniel 9:24-27, and the quotation of Isa 61:1-2; 58:6, all point to the theme of the Jubilee release (Lev 25:10) as a major component of the Messiah’s mission.¹² Within that context, the kinsman-redeemer has the right to purchase those who had been enslaved. The arrogant question by Christ’s kin, “Is not this *Joseph’s* son” (Luke 4:22, emphasis mine) is meant to parley any conviction either of their own imprisonment or His right to redeem.

Jesus discerns the people’s rebuke and declares, “no prophet is accepted in his hometown” (v. 24). Then, the story of rejection is powerfully linked to Israel’s past in order to show that the people’s

⁹ Except for the first verb which is an aorist active infinite, the rest of the verbs are in the aorist passive voice, thus alluding to the fact that Christ’s resurrection and authority is given rather than taken.

¹⁰ It is important to realize here that although the Scriptural allusions to the rejection and death of the Messiah are few in the gospel of Luke, there are many places where this theme is taken up in the life and ministry of Jesus.

¹¹ It is of interest to note here that the antonym of the word used for “rejection” in Luke 20:17 ἀπεδοκίμασαν is δοκίμος, which means “tested, approved, genuine, esteemed.”

¹² See James H. Park, “The Proclamation of Release in Luke 4:16-30,” *Asia Adventist Seminary Studies* 7 (2004), 27-37.

unbelief is but a continuation of the sins of the fathers (cf., Acts 7:50-51). In the Nazareth pericope (Luke 4:16-30), Jesus brings up the stories of Elijah feeding the heathen widow and Elisha healing Namaan, the Syrian. Just as Elijah had been rejected by the idolatrous nation, so Jesus would be rejected by this generation.

Despite Jesus' rejection by His earthly kinsmen, the voice which had spoken acceptance of the Son at the baptism is heard again at the transfiguration before He begins the journey that will lead to His ultimate rejection at Jerusalem (Luke 9:28-26). The martyred John, who had stood by His side at the baptism is now replaced by Moses and Elijah at the transfiguration. These two seminal Old Testament figures are well able to identify, sympathize and encourage Jesus as He sets His face to go to Jerusalem.¹³

Thus far, the analysis has proven that Christ revealed to His disciples that He must suffer according to the Scriptures at the beginning and at the ending of the travel narrative. A survey of Luke's use of Old Testament quotations has pointed out the two main texts that mention Christ's suffering, Luke 22:37 (cf. Isa 53:12) and rejection, Luke 20:17 (cf. Ps 118:12). While it may be said that the direct evidence that Christ *must* suffer according to Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms is limited to only two texts, the thematic elements brought to view by His own words and deeds greatly add to the substance of the claim.

The theme of Christ's inevitable suffering includes the Nazareth pericope (Luke 4:16-30), the key verse in Luke 9:22 which predicts His suffering, rejection, death and resurrection, and the close ties between Himself and other persecuted figures like Moses, Elijah and John the Baptist. The next section will attempt to show how the themes of suffering and rejection are further expanded in the book of Acts through the lives of Peter, Stephen, Philip and Paul.

3. The Followers of the Way Must Suffer

In the prologue of the book of Acts, Luke points out to Theophilus that "after His [Christ's] suffering He showed Himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive" (Acts 1:3). Thus it is evident

¹³ In the pivotal chapter 9, the names of John the Baptist, Elijah and "one of the prophets of long ago" (cf. Deut 18:18) are brought up two times. The first is in connection with Herod's perplexity after he had John killed (Luke 9:7, 8) and the disciples who respond to the question of Jesus of who the crowds say that He is (v. 19). Thus, Luke seeks to bind the lives and fates of these figures who share the same experience of being rejected by the earthly authorities, but confirmed by Divine mandate.

that Luke not only affirms the important theme of suffering/rejection and resurrection/acceptance that he carefully illuminated in his gospel, but wishes to carry it forth as a critical element in the life of the church, which would face similar opposition.

The Lukan theme of suffering and rejection not only would appear in the written document but would be part of the oral tradition of the gospel. In the prologue of the book of Luke, the gospel writer states that the apostles who had been with Jesus from the beginning were both "eyewitnesses and servants of the word." As eyewitnesses, the early disciples not only saw all that Jesus did, but were 'ear' witnesses to all that He said as well. Luke affirms this oral revelation by saying that Jesus not only "appeared" to the disciples but "spoke" about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3).¹⁴

Table 2 lists the twenty-three direct quotations from the Old Testament, which Luke quoted in the book of Acts. In Peter's speech to the disciples regarding the replacement of Judas, he quotes from Ps 69:25 (Acts 1:20). In his sermon to his fellow Judeans at Pentecost he cites from Joel's promise regarding the outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh (Acts 2:17-21; Joel 2:28-32). Then he cites Ps 16:8-11, which states that the Holy One would not see corruption, a verse that had not previously been given in the gospel of Luke. The enthronement verse (Ps 110:1), which had been quoted by Jesus in Luke 20:42 (cf. Matt 20:42), appears again in Acts 2:34, 35.

These Old Testament quotations show that Peter's sermon was in direct response to the perplexity felt by some concerning the gift of the Spirit ("What does this mean?" [Luke 2:12]), and the derision leveled by others ("They have had too much wine" [2:13]). In the midst of this confusion and mockery which would have prematurely led to the rejection of the work of the church, Peter stands up and gives a Christological explanation of the current events based on the Old Testament Scriptures.

After quoting Joel 2, Peter tells the Judean Jews that the manifestation of the Spirit is the result of the resurrection and enthronement of the very person they had rejected and put to death fifty days earlier. The Prophet, which they have rejected and killed, God has subsequently raised (Ps 16:8-11) and enthroned (Ps 110:1). Thus, Peter confirms the earlier paradigm given by Jesus in Luke 9:22 that He must suffer, be rejected and killed by the elders, but then would be raised to life. According to Peter,

¹⁴ Could it be that during the post-resurrection period, when the Lord opened their minds to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45) that the texts associated with His suffering and death were more fully given by Jesus and understood by the disciples?

this was "by God's set purpose and foreknowledge" (Acts 2:23) as clearly defined by the prophetic Scriptures and set forth by the life and teachings of Jesus.

In Acts 3, Peter is found speaking to the authorities in the Temple. He uses two verses from the Old Testament to illuminate the miracle that had just taken place with the crippled man: The first is found in the Messianic prophecy in Deut 18:15 where Moses tells Israel that a prophet will be raised up like himself and they must listen to him. Peter then adds that all who will not listen to this prophet will be completely cut off from the people (Acts 3:22, 23).¹⁵ The second is in Acts 3:25, where Peter cites the promise given to Abraham (cf. Gen 22:18; 26:4), and reminds the authorities that they are heirs to this blessing and that God has sent His servant first to them so that they might turn from their wicked ways.

The next day, Peter and John are confronted by the authorities to account for the miracle of the crippled man. In their defense the apostles quote Ps 118:22, about the rejected corner stone, a key verse used by Jesus in Luke 20:17. This verse is mentioned by Jesus in all three synoptic gospels (Matt 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17), and then again by Peter in 1 Pet 2:7.¹⁶ After Peter and John are released, the church under inspiration of the Spirit, sings Ps 2:1, 2 recounting the vanity of the nations in trying to oppose the Anointed One (Acts 4:24-26).¹⁷

The next eight citations from the Old Testament come from the long polemic of Stephen, which occupies a most critical juncture in Luke-Acts.¹⁸ The first two deal with the calling (Gen 12:1) of Abram and the revelation that his descendents would suffer four hundred years (Gen 15:13-14). Thus, Stephen points out that at the very beginning of the life of Israel, suffering was already a part of their divinely appointed history and

¹⁵ This verse is repeated again in Stephen's long polemic in Acts 7:37. After quoting the verse from Deuteronomy, Peter echoes what Christ had already said in Luke 24:26, 27, and 44: "Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days" (Acts 3:24).

¹⁶ As we have seen, this theme of rejection/exaltation is one of the central arguments set forth by Jesus and the church to explain His sufferings and consequent vindication.

¹⁷ Here again is a reference to how the prophets had foretold these events: "Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen" (Acts 4:27, 28).

¹⁸ "Recent literary criticism has demonstrated the pivotal juncture of Stephen's speech in (Acts 7) in illuminating the overarching plot of Luke's two volumes." David P Moessner, "'The Christ must Suffer': New Light on the Jesus-Peter, Stephen, Paul Parallels in Luke-Acts," *Novum Testamentum* 28 (1986), 227.

destiny (Acts 7:2-7). Then Stephen mentions Moses' twofold rejection by the people to be their ruler (7:27, 28, 35) as it is echoed in the life of Jesus, the ministry of the apostles, and Stephen's own impending martyrdom. The call of Moses at the burning bush (7:33, 34), the citing again of Deut 18:15 (already mentioned by Peter in chap 3:22), the making of the golden calf (Exod 32:1, 23; Amos 5:25-27), and finally the citation from Isa 66:1, 2 that heaven is God's throne and earth is His footstool (Acts 7:49), link the past redemptive history of Israel to the current Christ-event.¹⁹ In his final appeal, Stephen links the rejection of Christ and His church with the past transgressions of the fathers: "You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him" (Acts 7:51-52).²⁰

Like the transfiguration before His death, the Son of Man is now shown after His death in glory, standing next to the Father in heaven. This standing next to the Father provides the divine vindication of His Son and those who have followed Him by faith into the heavenly sanctuary. Just as Jesus forgave His enemies (Luke 23:24) and committed Himself to the Father (Luke 23:46) at the time of His exodus (cf. Luke 9:31), Stephen follows in the footsteps of His Lord at the end of his journey (Acts 7:59-60).²¹

Following Stephen's vision and death, which "link him inseparably to Moses and the prophet like Moses,"²² the Gentile mission begins in Samaria with Philip (Acts 8:5-8) followed by Peter and John who come to set the church's seal on the new mission field (Acts 8:14-17). Philip is directed to the eunuch from Ethiopia who is reading from Isa 53:7, 8 (Acts 8:32, 33). In an apparent echo of Luke 24:26, 27 where Jesus "begins" with Moses and all the prophets, "Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus." According to Parsons,

¹⁹ Moessner states in "The Christ Must Suffer," 228: "The journey motif that pulsates throughout this rehearsal not only serves as a convenient scaffolding for the leading ideas; it is integral to the view of Israel's history that informs the entire presentation."

²⁰ Note the rejection/deliverer motif is also echoed in the life of Joseph, *ibid.*, 229: "Though unrecognized by his brothers on their first visit this Joseph was *cast aside* by his own becomes exalted among them as their 'deliverer'." See comment about Moses also being "cast aside" on the same page.

²¹ See Moessner, "The Christ Must Suffer," 234, for a discussion on how Stephen's death parallels the death of Jesus.

²² *Ibid.*, 233.

Through the use of an intertextual echo, Phillip's preaching the good news, beginning with this Scripture (Acts 8:35), is given content by the precursor in Luke 24. Isaiah 53 is a part of those Scriptures that give testimony to the divine necessity of Christ's suffering for the redemption of Israel and for the sake of the repentance and the forgiveness of sins of the Gentiles.²³

One of the chosen instruments to accomplish the mission to the nations was Saul, about whom the Lord says, "I will show him how much he must suffer (δεῖ παθεῖν) (cf. Luke 9:22) for my name" (Acts 9:16). Paul's dramatic conversion from persecuting those of "The Way" ²⁴ to suffering with the crucified and risen Lord is immediately evident as the Jews in Damascus plan to kill him (9:23).

Some years later during his first missionary journey, Paul cites five out of the six Old Testament quotations in Acts attributed to him while defending his gospel in a synagogue at Pisidian Antioch. Much like Stephen's discourse, he rehearses the history of Israel, shows that Jesus was a descendant of David and though rejected by man, is the rightful heir of the Father (13:22, 33; cf. Heb 1:5, 5:5; 13:35).²⁵

After the rejection of Paul, which mirrors the rejection of Jesus, Peter and Stephen, he grounds his mission to the Gentiles upon Isa 49:6 (see Acts 13:47).²⁶ The last time Paul quotes the Old Testament in Acts is to apologize for his rude remarks towards the high priest (Acts 23:5; cf. Exod 22:28).²⁷ Lastly, James quotes Amos 9:11, 12 to justify the incorporation of the Gentiles (Acts 15:16-17).

From a brief overview of Luke's use of the Old Testament in his two-volume work, Luke-Acts, some general observations may be made:

²³ Parsons, "Isaiah 53 in Acts 8," 106.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 88-89: "The way of Jesus becomes paradigmatic for Jesus' followers. . . . It is not surprising, then, that the favorite term for the Christian movement in Acts is simply the 'Way' (see 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4, 24:14, 22)."

²⁵ Paul again emphasizes here that the rejection of Jesus was a fulfillment of the prophets: "The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath" (13:27).

²⁶ Moessner, "The Christ Must Suffer," 224: "Peter Stephen, Paul must suffer rejection like their Messiah, because that is the very manner in which the fulfillment of the messianic history takes place within the promised plans of God."

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 248: "Like the mountain revelation, so Paul is sent on a journey mission which will eventually take a decisive turn in the Temple as Paul journeys to Jerusalem." Cf. *ibid.*, 250.

1. It appears that the revelation that Jesus gave to His disciples in Luke 9:22 unfolded within the context of the journey narrative concomitantly to their capacity to grasp the truth which had been foretold by Moses, the Psalms and all the prophets about the Lord's Anointed who "must suffer" and would be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the law in Jerusalem.

2. The three key Old Testament texts quoted by Jesus in the gospel of Luke (20:17, 42, 43; 22:37), although few, provide a solid basis from which the early Church would reveal its life and the continuing saga of testimony, rejection, and expanding witness to those outside the covenant of faith. In addition to the rich thematic elements of the journey narrative and the three key texts, it must also be added the Nazareth pericope in Luke 4:16-32 and the post resurrection instruction of Jesus to his disciples in Luke 24.

3. Each of the three key texts in Luke are repeated in the book of Acts with additional textual and thematic references. All of these texts appear prior to the Jerusalem Council in the section of Acts 1-15 and are concentrated with Peter in Acts 2-4, Stephen's long polemic in Acts 7, in the story of Philip and the eunuch in Acts 7-8, and the defense of Paul before the synagogue in Acts 13. Table 2 summarizes this information.

Speaker	Acts	OT	Content
Peter	Acts 1:20	Ps 69:25	May another take Judas' place
Peter	Acts 2:17-21	Joel 2:28-32	Pouring out Spirit on all people.
Peter	Acts 2:25-28 Acts 13:35	Ps 16:8,11	Christ will not suffer corruption.
Peter Jesus Jesus	Acts 2:34, 35 Matt 22:44 Luke 20:42	Ps 110:1	Sit at right hand, enemies a footstool.
Peter Stephen	Acts 3:22, 23 Acts 7:37	Deut 18:18, 19	Raise up a prophet like Moses, you must listen to him.
Peter	Acts 3:25	Gen 22:18 Gen 26:4	Through your seed all the nations will be blessed.
Peter Jesus Jesus Jesus Peter	Acts 4:11 Matt 21:42 Mark 12:10 Luke 20:17 1 Pet 2:7	Ps 118:22	The stone the builders have rejected has become the capstone.
Church	Acts 4:25	Ps 2:1, 2	The nations rage against the Anointed One in vain.

Table 2: *Direct Old Testament Quotations in Acts*

Speaker	Acts	OT	Content
Stephen	Acts 7:3	Gen 12:1	Abram must leave his country.
Stephen	Acts 7:6, 7	Gen15:13, 14	Descendents will be slaves for 400 yrs.
Stephen Stephen	Acts 7:27, 28 Acts 7:35	Exod 2:13, 14	Who made you ruler over us?
Stephen	Acts 7:33, 34	Exod 3:5-10	Moses at the burning bush.
Stephen	Acts 7:33, 34	Exod 3:5-10	Moses at the burning bush.
Stephen Peter	Acts 7:37 Acts 3:22	Deut 18:15	Raise up a prophet like Moses, you must listen to him.
Stephen	Acts 7:40	Exod 32:1, 23	Making of the golden calf.
Stephen	Acts 7:42, 43	Amos 5:25-27	Israel worshipped false gods.
Stephen	Acts 7:49	Isa 66:1-2	Heaven is throne, earth footstool.
Narrator	Acts 8:32, 33	Isa 53:7-8	The Suffering Servant
Paul	Acts 13:22	1Sam 13:14	David is man after God's heart.
Paul	Acts 13:33 Heb. 1:5 Heb 5:5	Ps 2:7	You are my Son, this day I have become your Father.
Paul	Acts 13:35 Acts 2:25-28	Ps 16:10	The Holy One will not see decay.
Paul	Acts 13:47	Isa 49:6	Light to Gentiles to bring salvation.
James	Acts 15:16, 17	Amos 9:11, 12	Rebuild David's tent to include nations.
Paul	Acts 23:5	Exod 22:28	Must not speak evil about the ruler.

Table 2: Direct Old Testament Quotations in Acts—Continued

4. Reflections on Suffering, Rejection, and Mission

The health and wealth gospel, which was so fervently preached in the prosperous 80s and 90s, seems a far cry from the suffering Christ and His disciples went through for the sake of the gospel. Apparently, Paul faced the same cultural barriers in his day, because "a deity's approval meant earthly blessing, and inasmuch as the desire for health, wealth and status was the driving motive for participation in the Graeco-Roman civic

cults.”²⁸ Therefore, “Paul’s suffering posed an immense barrier to the gospel.”²⁹ After all, how could a divinely ordained messenger be the depository of so much affliction?³⁰

Hafemann has argued on the “theological origin, cause and purpose” of Paul’s suffering within the framework of his mission.³¹ Instead of being a sign of God’s curse, the sufferings that Paul experienced placed him squarely in the line of the patriarchs and prophets that often had been subjected to the same rejection.³² Instead of being a sign of God’s disapproval, the sufferings that Paul endured were the very element that sealed his calling as an apostle.³³

In the very first revelation of the gospel, the Lord God said to the serpent, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Gen 3:15). In the very last episode of salvation history it is written,

²⁸ Scott Hafemann, “‘Because of Weakness,’ (Galatians 4:13): The Role of Suffering in the Mission of Paul” in *Gospel to the Nations* (ed. Peter Bolt and Mark Thompson; Leicester, England: Apollos, Intervarsity Press., 2000), 134-135.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 135.

³⁰ See 2 Cor 11:23-33 where Paul lists the many sufferings he had to endure as an apostle. In addition, the modern pluralistic mentality of ‘I’m ok, you’re ok,’ where differences are downplayed and rejection is rare, makes it hard to fathom the words of Paul that, “everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim 3:12).

³¹ Hafemann, “Because of Weakness,” 133. While it is not within the scope of this article to present Hafemann’s many and excellent links between suffering and ministry, the following quotation shows the essence of his argument: “For Christ, this suffering was the centre of his calling as the messianic Son of God who was sent to atone for the sins of God’s people. For Paul, it was the centre of his calling as an apostle, through whom the gospel of Christ was being mediated to the Gentiles” (135). See also his excellent doctoral dissertation presented in the book, Scott Hafemann, *Suffering and Ministry in the Spirit: Paul’s Defense of His Ministry in II Corinthians 2:14-3:3* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990).

³² In fact it would be of interest for further study to see if the notion of rejection and suffering might be one of the key theological elements in the historical recounting of Israel in the New Testament. As we have seen, it certainly was a main focal point of Stephen’s long polemic in Acts 7, which ultimately led to his demise.

³³ Note what Paul says in 2 Cor 11:23 when contrasting his apostleship with the false teachers: “Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this). I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again.” While he does spend one verse affirming his Jewish background (2 Cor 11:22), he spends eleven verses outlining his sufferings because it is these that give him standing in the sight of God as a true apostle (2 Cor 11:23-33).

“Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus” (Rev 12:17). It is clear from these two verses that those who attempt to faithfully spread the gospel will always be met with severe opposition.

Could it be that in our current studies, teaching, and practice of mission the aspect of suffering and rejection is too often left out of the theoretical and statistical frameworks which are often set forth as paradigms of success?³⁴ As the life of Paul and many others have demonstrated, both the personal spiritual existence and the mission of the church are permeated with internal and external barriers that often cause suffering. Those who follow Jesus on the Way will meet the same difficulties, the same enmity that He met.

Before I had the privilege of teaching pastors in graduate school, I spent twenty-five years ‘in the trenches’ serving the local church. From that real world experience I have encapsulated my own philosophy of church growth with the words, “God grows the church by growing people . . . and God grows people through suffering.” If we are to grow we must “take root below and bear fruit above” (Isa 37:31). As Jesus Himself pointed out, the seed must first be buried in the ground and die if it is to reproduce life (John 12:24).

A deeper understanding of the role that suffering, spiritual death, faith and fruit have in the mission of the church will better prepare both the leaders and the laity to overcome the internal and external barriers which are often met as the church goes forth to make disciples of the nations until Jesus comes.

³⁴ For instance, it would be difficult to find the notion of suffering and rejection as a component of growth in the popular church growth tool set forth by Christian A. Schwarz in *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches* (Carol Stream: ChurchSmart Resources, 1998).