

ETHIOPIAN GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

**‘The God of Abraham, Isaac and
Jacob’ (Acts 3:13)—Is That All?**
Learning about God from the
book of Acts

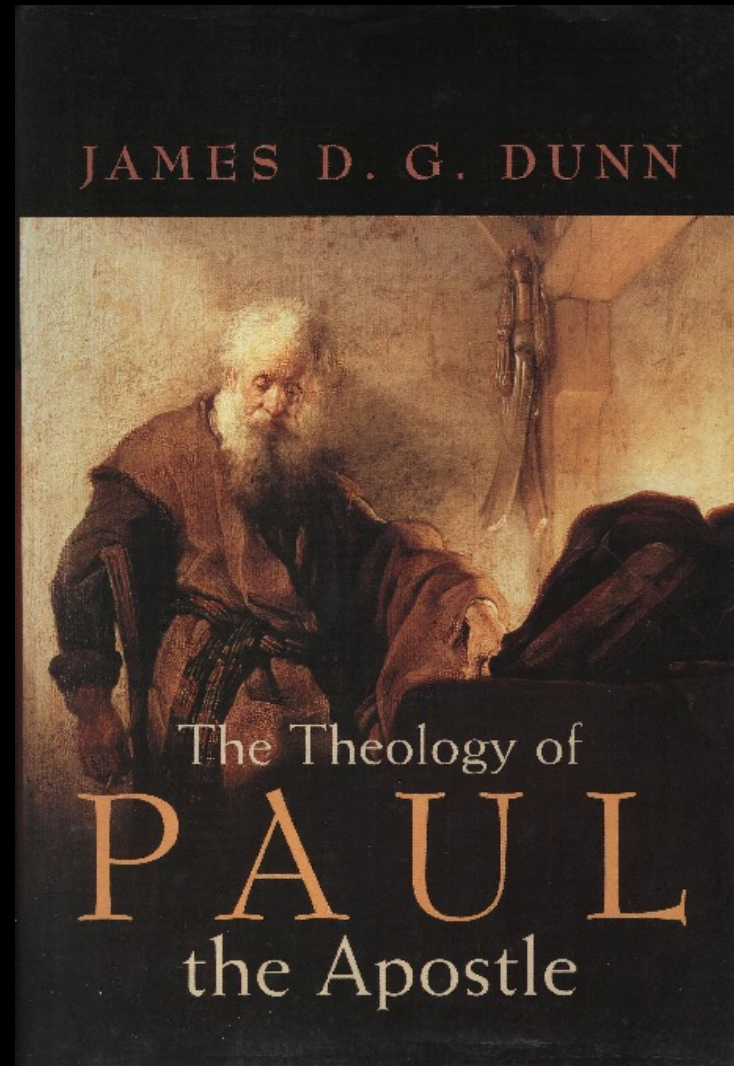
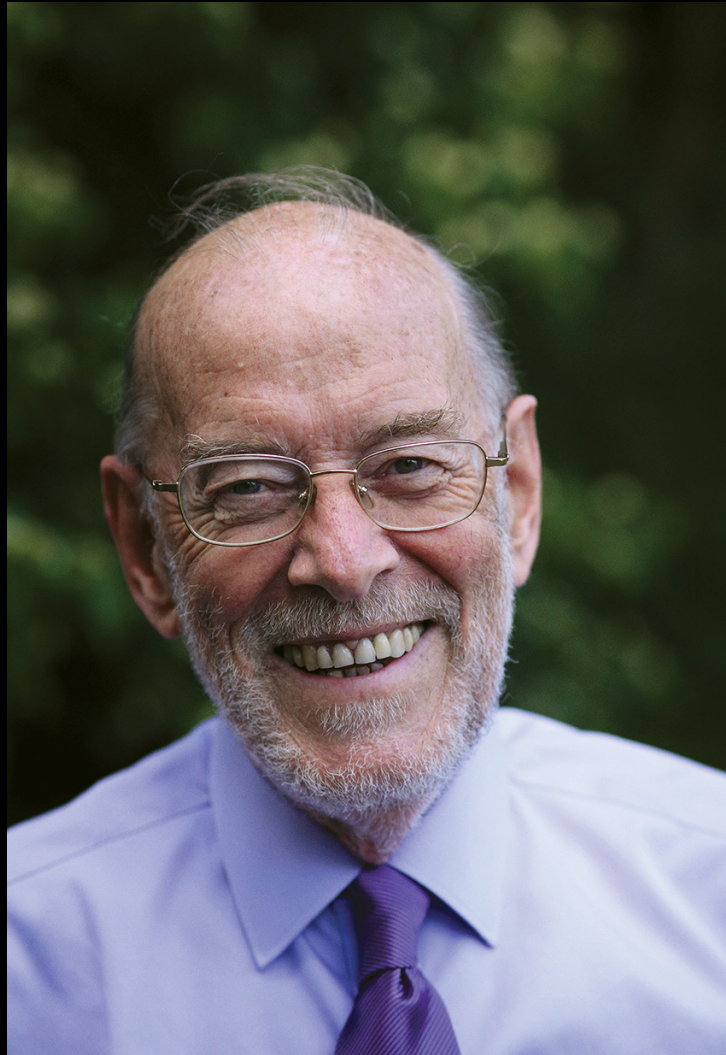
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<http://stevewalton.info>

James Dunn



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Paul's Gentile converts probably were drawn largely, in the first instance at least, from among those Gentiles who seem to have frequented, even crowded, many a diaspora synagogue at the time. (30)

Difficulties for Dunn

- I Thessalonians
 - 1:9: 'you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God'
- Kirby Applegate, 'God the Father as Giver of Life: Exploring a Pauline Motif', PhD thesis, Durham University, 2024
 - God identified as the one who raises Jesus from the dead

The gateway to Acts Acts 1–2

The gateway to Acts

- 1:1-11
 - ἤρξατο 'began' 1:1
 - Jesus acting from heaven
 - God's βασιλεία 'kingdom' 1:3; cf. 28:31
 - 'the promise of the Father' 1:4
 - ἐπήρθη 'lifted up' 1:9
 - ἀναλημφθείς 'being taken' 1:11

The gateway to Acts

- 1:12-26
 - prayer 1:14, 24-25
 - divine necessity of fulfilment of Scripture
'it was necessary (ἐδεῖ) for the Scripture to be fulfilled' 1:16
 - casting lots
 - 'The lot is cast into the lap, but the decision is the LORD's alone'
Prov 16:33

The gateway to Acts

- 2:1-13 narrative
 - sound ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ 'from heaven' 2:2

‘Then the Lord thundered from heaven and
made his voice heard with a mighty sound’
Sirach 46:17

‘The LORD roars from Zion
and utters his voice from Jerusalem, and the
heavens and the earth shake.’
Joel 3:16 LXX

The gateway to Acts

- 2:1-13 narrative
 - sound ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ‘from heaven’ 2:2
 - noise Sirach 46:17; Joel 3:16 LXX
 - fire at Sinai
Deut 4:36 LXX; Exod 19:18; 24:17
 - ὤφθησαν ‘appeared’ 11x in Luke-Acts for meeting God or a heavenly agent
 - ἐπλήσθησαν ‘they were filled’ 2:4

The gateway to Acts

- 2:14-40 speech
 - Joel 3:1-5a LXX—the Spirit poured out *ἐπὶ πᾶσαν σάρκα* ‘on all flesh’ (2:17)
 - ‘not the end of time, but the time of the end’ (Robert Brawley)
 - v 33 **Jesus** pours out the Spirit; cf. 1:8
 - LXX Pss 15:8-11a; 109:1

22 **Jesus of Nazareth, a man** accredited by God...doing deeds of power and signs which God did through him...23 **this man**, according to the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God you nailed to a cross and killed by the hand of lawless people, 24 **this man** God raised...32 **this Jesus** God raised... 36 and **him** Lord and Messiah God has made, **this Jesus** whom you crucified.

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 - response invited
 - ὅσους ἂν προσκαλέσηται κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν ‘everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself’ v 39 with v 38

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 - response invited
 - those who are μακρὰν ‘far away’; cf. 22:21

The gateway to Acts

- 2:41-47 narrative
 - v 47 the Lord προσετίθει 'was adding'
 - people added τῷ κυρίῳ 'to the Lord'
5:14; 11:24

The gateway to Acts

- God's identity and action integral
 - God's reign known and experienced
 - God's will sought
 - God has exalted Jesus
- Jesus acts from heaven in concert with God
 - pouring out the Spirit
 - creating and growing Jesus-community

Acts 3:1–4:31

Acts 3:1–4:31

- 3:1 prayer
- 3:8, 9 healing leads to praising God; cf. 3:13
 - through faith in Jesus' name 3:16
 - God has glorified (ἐδόξασεν) Jesus 3:13;
cf. 3:15, 21

‘the miracles of Acts, of which the restoration of the beggar at the Beautiful Gate is the archetype, are the present traces of the resurrection of Christ, the permanent effects of Easter.’

Simon Butticaaz (my translation)

Acts 3:1–4:31

- Peter's speech focuses on God's action
 - and how to respond (or not)
- God the God of the ancestors 3:13
 - now at work in and through Jesus 3:13, 15
 - fulfilling the Scriptures 3:18, 22, 23

Acts 3:1–4:31

- God at work through the death of Jesus
 - 4:2 ἐν τῷ Ἰησοῦ τὴν ἀνάστασιν **τὴν** ἐκ νεκρῶν
‘in Jesus the resurrection **which is** from the dead’
 - 4:10 God raising Jesus
 - 4:11 citing Ps 118:22—Jesus now the source of salvation 4:12
- contrast the council’s conversation 4:14-18
 - response in terms of God 4:19-20
 - the people praising God 4:21

Acts 3:1–4:31

- turning to God in prayer 4:23-31
 - *δέσποτα* 'sovereign Lord' 4:24a
 - creator 4:24b
 - speaks in Scripture 4:25-26; Ps 2:1-2 LXX
 - request 4:29-30

Acts 3:1–4:31

- God active in
 - healing
 - enabling God-talk and Jesus-talk
 - fulfilling Scripture
 - glorifying and validating Jesus
- God is now known in and through Jesus and by the Spirit's work

Acts 4:32–5:11

Acts 4:32–5:11

- summary 4:32-35
- Barnabas 4:36-37
- Ananias and Sapphira 5:1-11

Acts 4:32–5:11

- summary 4:32-35
 - 33 and with great deeds of power the apostles gave testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus—and great grace was upon them all. 34 **For** no-one was needy among them; **for** those were owners of fields or houses used to sell them, and bring the proceeds of what they sold 35 and place it at the apostles' feet, and they were distributed to each one, as anyone had need.

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And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will give you, and I will remove the stony heart from your flesh and give you a fleshly heart. And it is my spirit which I will give you, and I will act so that you consistently walk (πορεύησθε) in line with my righteous commandments and will keep on guarding [observing] (φυλάξησθε) my decrees and performing (ποιήσητε) them.

Ezek 36:26-27 LXX (my translation)

Acts 4:32–5:11

- Ananias and Sapphira 5:1-11
 - echoes of key words from 4:32-35
 - God a significant character vv 3, 4, 9
 - allusion to Achan story
Josh 7:1 LXX νοσφίζω 'pilfer, steal';
see vv 2, 3
 - cosmic battle of Satan and God

Acts 4:32–5:11

- close relationship of God and the Holy Spirit
- personal characteristics of the Spirit
- the Spirit acting in judgement to purify the community

Acts 9:1-22

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- Κύριος 'Lord'
 - v 17 'Brother Saul, **the Lord** (ὁ κύριος) has sent me, **Jesus** (Ἰησοῦς) who was seen by you on the way'
 - v 5a 'He said, "Who are you, **Lord** (κύριε)?"'
 - 'Acts 9:3-6 is best read as combining theophanic effects within a Christological presentation for theological effect.'
(Matthew Sleeman)

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 - v 5b 'He said, '**I am Jesus (ἐγώ εἰμι Ἰησοῦς)**, whom you are persecuting'
 - v 10a He spoke to him [Ananias] in a vision, **the Lord (ὁ κύριος)**'
 - v 10b 'Here I am, **Lord**' ἰδοὺ ἐγώ, **κύριε**
echoes Gen 22:1 LXX

When Saul is finally healed, the detail that ‘something like scales [ὡς λεπίδες] fell from his eyes’ (v. 18) cements the impression that Saul’s blindness is the result of divine affliction. Scalelike objects, after all, are outside obstructions that do not normally appear from gazing too long at a light.

Brittany Wilson

Acts 9:1-22

- Saul's loss of control v 8
 - God gives sight or blindness Exod 4:11
 - 9:17 ὁ κύριος... Ἰησοῦς ὁ ὀφθείς σοι
'the Lord... Jesus who **was seen** by you'
- carrying the Lord's name vv 15, 16
- v 20 'He is **the son of God** (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ)'
- v 22 'He is the Messiah (ὁ χριστός)'

Conclusion

Key questions

- How is God portrayed?
- What does God do, or is done to God?
- What functions does the God-talk have?
- What impact do the author's portrait of Jesus and the Spirit have on his understanding of God, and vice versa?
- What agents and adversaries does God have in this book?

Thank you!

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