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W6 Reflection: The Significance of Acts, the Christian and Jewish Bible, Narrative and Setting

1. Should we try to imitate the first Christians in the book of Acts? Why or why not? If so, how much?
 - a. We should not always try to imitate the first Christians in the book of Acts, because the church of Acts was by no means perfect; some Protestants believe that the church examples and Christian experiences within the first century are what we should look up to and display how we should conduct our Christian journeys and spirituality today. However, the churches in Acts enforced all kinds of controversial practices, such as selling possessions within the church and ritual snake handling... Luke was not trying to tell us about church history and how to become like the Christians from the first century; since this is the case, we must ask ourselves, why was Luke sharing these accounts, and for what purpose did he do so? The idea is not that Christians are disobedient when they don't practice everything the Christians in Acts practiced, but the idea is to take what is being said as a whole and apply God's word in its context; as Fee and Stuart describe in *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, "Not every sentence in every narrative or speech is necessarily trying to tell *us* something. But every sentence in every narrative or speech contributes to what God is trying to say as a whole through Acts" (Fee and Stuart). Since this is so, then the question would be, how much should we imitate the first Christians? We should not imitate all the practices of the first Christians in the book of Acts, but as Fee and Stuart describe, we should imitate their practice of listening to what God is trying to teach us as a whole.
2. Why are the books of the Christian Bible in a different order than the books of the Jewish Bible?
 - a. The books of the Christian Bible are in a different order than the books of the Jewish Bible, because the Old Testament is a later Christian tradition after the accounts of Jesus and the apostles, compared to the writings of ancient Jewish tradition. In the Old Testament, there are five different sections: the pentateuch, followed by the historical books, the poetic books and the books of the prophets. In ancient Jewish tradition, however, separate scrolls contained these works, and they were a three part collection known as the TaNaK. TaNaK is a Hebrew term referring to the Torah, Nevi'im and the Ketuvim, mentioned in the accounts of the dead sea scrolls, the wisdom of sirach and Jesus of Nazareth. These scrolls are coordinated so that they reference each other. They were developed by famous

biblical contributors such as Moses and David, while a significant portion of these contributors were anonymous scribes and prophets (Bible Project - Overview: TaNaK / Old Testament).

3. Why is it important to pay attention to the plot of the stories in the Old Testament?
 - a. It is important to pay attention to the plot of the stories in the Old Testament, because if the plot and biblical narratives are taken out of context, the whole plot can change drastically, just like in any narrative taken out of context. As an illustration, the biblical narrative in the story of Gideon is often overlooked; Gideon and the Israelites were living in fear because of the Midianites, and God called Gideon to step up and defeat them. However, Gideon is hesitant, so he asks God for a sign so he could really know God is talking to him. He remains scared and hesitant, so he asks God for another sign. However, people mistake this story for a representation of seeking God's will, but this story is actually about Gideon asking for another sign because he's not fully trusting as they should be. This account in its biblical context and narrative changes the whole meaning of the story, because while the story is not offering tips for people who want to know the will of God, it is about God's commitment to use flawed people for His glory (Bible Project - Plot in Biblical Narrative).
4. Why is it important to pay attention to the setting of the stories in the Old Testament?
 - a. It is important to pay attention to the setting of the stories in the Old Testament, because in a story, the settings prepare us for what's to come. In the same way, the biblical accounts of Egypt getting struck with plagues after Abraham lies about his wife being his sister prepares us for what is to come when the Abraham's great grandsons arrive in Egypt before they become slaves in the same land. While Egypt is a place where people experience trouble, it is a place where God comes in and restores his people. A great example of this is in the story of Joseph. When Joseph gets imprisoned in Egypt due to Pharaoh's wife lying about a crime Joseph never committed, this account is similar to when Abraham lies about his wife being his sister, and then the Egyptians experience all these plagues. Just as the setting of Egypt prepares us for what is to come, the setting of the stories in the Old Testament reveal to us what to expect (Bible Project - Setting in Biblical Narrative).

Bibliography:

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