

BOOK REVIEW

Josep Ruis-Camps and Jenny Read-Heimerdinger, *The Message of Acts in Codex Bezae: A Comparison with the Alexandrian Tradition I. Acts 1.1–5.42: Jerusalem* (JSNTSup, 257; New York/London: T. & T. Clark, 2004). xii + 377 pp. Hdbk. \$150.00 USD.

Ruis-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger have set out on an ambitious project to compare the Codex Bezae version of Acts to the familiar Alexandrian tradition (AT). In this first of four volumes, Ruis-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger trace the development of the Christian Church within Jerusalem. Based on the first five chapters of Acts, they expound the subtle differences between the two texts that dramatically affect theology and the shape of the early Church.

The book opens with a large general introduction explaining the specific focuses of this project. Ruis-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger begin by outlining the current issues regarding the text of Acts and its relationship with Codex Bezae. They do an excellent job of placing Codex Bezae in relationship to the other codices, and address some fundamental issues regarding the comparison of Codex Bezae to the AT and other western texts.

Ruis-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger portray Codex Bezae as a unique codex in comparison to the AT. They state that Codex Bezae is not only historically focused like the AT, but is more concerned with the theological development of the apostles and of the early Church. Ruis-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger propose that Codex Bezae views the apostles as struggling to understand their new relationship with God and the true meaning of what Jesus said to them. Consequently, the disciples stumble, and Ruis-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger draw attention to Codex Bezae's subtle indications that they are still learning what it means to be followers of Christ. This theme is well expressed throughout the book and especially within the commentary section.

Also within the introduction, Ruis-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger outline their methodology for their comparison, such as linguistic analysis, including discourse analysis and different literary devices. They also note that Codex Bezae is fragmentary, with a few large sections missing. In these sections they will not attempt to reconstruct Codex Bezae, instead they will use other texts that are known to share similar readings to Codex Bezae. Ruis-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger recognize that this is not ideal, but believe there is little other recourse.

One of the main thrusts of this book, which Ruis-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger develop, is the Jewish nature of Codex Bezae. They place Codex Bezae firmly within the first-century Jewish context and believe that this understanding affected the author's composition and interpretation of events. Ruis-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger continually draw out subtle hints and parallels between the Codex and Old Testament stories, phrases and theology. This is a real strength of the book and provides a number of interesting insights into interpreting the book of Acts in a different, but theologically sound, way.

Each of the different sections of the book of Acts is composed of an overview, a translation, critical apparatus and commentary. These elements provide the structure for the remainder of the book. The overviews give a general understanding of the upcoming section and a broad outline of its content. It also expresses the proposed structure, if any, and highlights any important themes. These in general are helpful and create a framework by which to read the upcoming section.

The translation section consists of a parallel English translation of Codex Bezae and Codex Vaticanus. These literal translations are easily comparable and allow the English reader to observe the major differences between the two texts, and any important changes.

The next section is the critical apparatus. This is a very technical and detailed analysis of the differences between the two Greek codices. This thorough examination evaluates every difference between the two texts and outlines the support that each has from different sources. This section is very systematic and would be very useful for anyone doing textual criticism on the book of Acts.

One of the main strengths of this book is Ruis-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger's insightful commentary on the different passages in Acts. As mentioned earlier, Ruis-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger have a number of interesting insights into the relationship between the book of Acts and Jewish culture and history. In addition to this, they make a number

of references to Luke and his writing style and focus. Ruis-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger make an excellent case for Luke's authorship of Acts and outline a number of parallels between the theology and structure of Luke and Acts.

Within the commentary, Ruis-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger develop the theological differences between Codex Bezae and AT. Ruis-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger show that Luke's focus in Codex Bezae was to portray the apostles as human, and able to make mistakes and to grow and learn. Other theological issues are also raised, such as the importance of the Temple in Jerusalem, and the growth of the early Church. In addition, they also clarify and explain the importance and theological significance of the text-critical issues that were developed in the critical apparatus section.

Also included in the book are nine excurses. These excurses are interesting and insightful articles relating to themes derived from the text and provide a more in-depth study of a particular point raised within the commentary. These excurses are useful for further study, and for tying together specific related points raised within different passages. Another additional feature is an excellent bibliography, which is useful for further study. However, there is no Scripture index or glossary, although these might be reserved for the final volume.

Although there are a large number of strengths within this book, there are a few areas for improvement. First, Ruis-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger are too dependent on chiasms to provide structure within the book of Acts and, as a result, these are found within almost every section of text. Although there are some chiasms within the text of Acts, they are not as prevalent as Ruis-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger make them out to be.

Secondly, Ruis-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger state that they attempted to limit the amount of Greek within the book in order to make it more accessible to a wider range of readers. This unnecessarily limits the depth of the book because the people who are to make use of this specialized topic are people who are particularly interested in the Greek text. To their credit, within the critical apparatus there is a strong focus on the differences between the two Greek texts. However, it would be more beneficial if Ruis-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger made both the Greek of Codex Bezae and Vaticanus available to the reader. This would not alienate the general reader because of the English

translations, but would allow a greater understanding of the diversity between the two texts for those with an understanding of Greek.

Overall, *The Message of Acts in Codex Bezae* is an excellent book. It is insightful, thorough and develops a number of important issues regarding the translation and interpretation of Acts. Ruis-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger challenge traditional readings of Acts and provide some new perspective to challenging concerns. In conclusion, this first volume is an excellent beginning to this project and should be considered for anyone in the study of Acts.

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