

BOOK REVIEWS

Craig S. Keener, *For All Peoples: A Biblical Theology of Missions in the Gospels and Acts*, APTS Press Occasional Papers Series (Baguio City, Philippines: Asia Pacific Theological Seminary Press, 2020). x + 108 pp. \$12.99 paperback, \$9.99 Kindle.

When scholars think of Craig Keener's contributions to the academy, they often have visions of his encyclopedic four volume commentary, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012-2015), but Keener has surprised us with a short book of 108 pages filled with exegetical insights highlighting the missional thrust of the gospels and Acts. The brevity of the book is in keeping with the intention of APTS Press in this series "to produce smaller books comprised of articles that deal with theological, anthropological and missiological issues relevant to serving God in Asia" (x).

Keener uses the same theological method to analyze the missional contribution of Matthew, John, and Acts in his first three chapters. He identifies a key text in each book (Matt 28:19-20; John 20:21-22; Acts 1-2) and then uses it as a lens to provide perspective on the missional emphasis throughout each narrative. The fourth chapter is more topically oriented; there Keener discusses how God's people are "One New Temple in Christ (Eph 2:11-22; Acts 21:27-29; Mk 11:17; Jn 4:20-24)." The fifth chapter examines Acts 16:8-10 (Paul's call to Macedonia) from a historical and geographical perspective in order to highlight the cross-cultural significance of the gospel's advancement from Asia to Europe.

Keener views the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20) as "no afterthought" to Matthew's Gospel; "rather, it summarizes much of the heart of his message" (3). Keener gives a brief analysis of this passage, positing that the "going" participle is "an essential part of the commission" (3n2) that summarizes the "cross-cultural ministry" element of the command to make disciples. Keener then highlights the missiological thread that runs throughout Matthew by citing several passages that include Gentiles and a more expansive view of the kingdom. The "baptizing" and "teaching" participles (28:19-20) serve as a basis for a discussion about the Trinitarian implications of the Great Commission and some practical guidelines in living out a mission that "is not just about evangelism, but also about training disciples who can partner in the task of evangelism" (15).

Jesus's commission to his disciples in John 20:21-22 provides the outline for chapter 2. "This passage involves three primary elements

relevant to our discussion of Johannine missiology—the model of Jesus, the empowerment of the Spirit, and the mission of Jesus’s followers” (22). Jesus’s commission from the Father is unique in some ways, yet the Father’s sending of Jesus provides a model for Jesus’s sending of his disciples. In handling this thorny passage where Jesus breathes on the disciples and commands them to receive the Spirit, Keener distinguishes between the historical timing of Pentecost and the insufflation of the Spirit in John 20:22; however, “at least on the narrative level, this passage must carry the symbolic weight of John’s entire theology of the Spirit” (32). For Keener, this giving of the Spirit has associations with new creation life, purification, prophetic empowerment, and the divine presence. Regarding the third point of emphasis in this chapter, the mission of Jesus’s followers, Keener notes that “a central part of this mission is to proclaim Jesus’s identity” (41). He cites several Johannine passages in support of this and then briefly discusses how the loving community also reveals Jesus.

It is clear to Keener that “Acts is about mission” (47), and he uses the first two chapters of Acts and a clever bit of alliteration to lay out Luke’s missiological perspective. In his third chapter, he discusses The Promise of Pentecost (1:4-8), The Preparation for Pentecost (1:12-26), The Proofs of Pentecost (2:1-4), The Peoples of Pentecost (2:5-13), The Prophecy of Pentecost (2:17-21), The Preaching of Pentecost (2:22-40), and The Purpose of Pentecost (2:41-47). Keener emphasizes the Spirit-empowered, prophetic witness of the believers and views Paul’s arrival in Rome as “a proleptic fulfillment of the mission” (54). The tongues speaking at Pentecost “does not appear here arbitrarily as one possible sign among many. Instead, it relates to Acts’ central theme articulated in 1:8—i.e., Spirit-inspired, cross-cultural witness” (58). Although the discussion is brief, it touches on several important theological issues and is well-informed by substantial research.

The fourth chapter incorporates some Pauline passages into the discussion about the temple symbolizing the division between Jew and Gentile. “Paul’s image of a temple uniting Jew and Gentile challenged the ethnically segregated reality of the temple standing in his own day” (74). Jesus had already provided the precedent for Paul’s temple theology when he cited Isaiah 56:7 (Mark 11:17) regarding the international significance of the temple as a place of prayer and John’s account of the Samaritan woman (4:20-24). Similarly, Romans gives additional support to the idea that God intended to unite multiple cultures in Christ, and this emphasis continues into Revelation. This chapter has a very devotional quality to it and has clear implications for how God’s people should be united across cultures.

The fifth and final chapter is more technical in nature and draws heavily on Greco-Roman history. Keener attempts to avoid an anachronistic reading of ancient geography, but he contends that the gospel's advance from Troas to Macedonia was essentially a movement from Asia to Europe in the mind of an ancient person. "Thus in a sense, Acts narrates the beginning of what some could have viewed as an Asian movement's (spiritual) conquest in the reverse direction. Jews were considered Asian; and the gospel coming from Asia to Europe reversed the Greek invasions of Troy and, more recently, Alexander's invasion of Persia" (106). As Luke does not explicitly refer to Alexander's invasion of Asia, Keener speaks only of the plausibility of Luke presenting the mission to Europe as a reverse of Alexander's invasion. Nonetheless, this is a thought-provoking chapter that encourages the reader to ponder the cultural implications of the gospel's progress from east to west.

For All Peoples is not a full-fledged biblical theology of missions, but a series of articles focused on this theme and drawn primarily from the gospels and Acts. It has great value as a resource for more in-depth studies, as it has substantial footnotes that are indicative of Keener's vast knowledge of ancient sources. This book also has a wonderful devotional, practical, and inspirational quality about it. The reader will be challenged to notice the centrality of missions in various New Testament books and to engage in spreading the gospel across cultural lines.

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