



Lecture # 12 Part 1

INTRODUCTION TO ACTS

I. OPENING STATEMENTS

- A. Acts forms an indispensable link between the accounts of Jesus' life and their interpretation and the application of these truths in the Apostolic Letters of the New Testament.
- B. The early church developed and circulated two collections of New Testament writings: (1) **the Gospels** and (2) **the Apostle (i.e. Paul's letters)**. However, with the early Christological heresies of the second century, the value of the book of Acts became obvious. Acts reveals the content and purpose of Apostolic preaching and the amazing results of the gospel.
- C. The historical accuracy of Acts has been accentuated and confirmed by modern archaeological discoveries, especially in relation to the title of Roman governmental officials (ex. *stratēgoi*, [Acts 16:20](#), [22](#), [35](#), [36](#), [38](#) [also used of temple captains, [Luke 22:4](#), [52](#); [Acts 4:1](#); [Acts 5:24–26](#)]; *politarchas*, [Acts 17:6](#), [8](#), and *prōtō*, [Acts 28:7](#), cf. A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*). Luke records the tensions within the early church, even the fight between Paul and Barnabas (cf. [Acts 15:39](#)). This reflects a fair, balanced, researched, historical/theological writing.
- D. The title of the book is found in slightly different forms in the ancient Greek texts.
 - 1. manuscript \aleph (i.e. **Sinaiticus**), Tertullian, **Didymus**, Eusebius have "Acts" (**ASV**, **NIV**)
 - 2. manuscripts **B** (i.e. **Vaticanus**), **D** (i.e. **Bezae**) and \aleph in a subscription, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyprian, Athanasius have "Acts of the Apostles" (**KJV**, **RSV**, **NEB**)
 - 3. manuscripts **A**² (i.e. first corrector of Alexandrinus), **E**, **G**, Chrysostom have "Acts of the Holy Apostles"It is possible that the Greek word, *praxeis*, *praxis* (i.e. acts, ways, behavior, deeds, practice), reflects an ancient Mediterranean literary genre, which denotes the lives and actions of famous or influential people (i.e. John, Peter, Stephen, Philip, Paul). The book probably originally had no title (like Luke's Gospel).
- E. There are two distinct textual traditions of Acts. The shorter one is the **Alexandrian** (MSS **P**⁴⁵, **P**⁷⁴, \aleph , **A**, **B**, **C**). The Western family of manuscripts (**P**²⁹, **P**³⁸, **P**⁴⁸ and **D**) seems to include many more details. It is



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uncertain whether they are from the author or were later insertions by scribes, based on early church traditions. Most textual scholars believe that the Western manuscripts have later additions because they (1) smooth out or try to fix unusual or difficult texts; (2) add additional details; (3) add specific phrases to accentuate Jesus as the Christ; and (4) are not quoted by any early Christian writers in the first three centuries (cf. F. F. Bruce, *Acts: Greek Text*, pp. 69–80). For a more detailed discussion consult *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* by Bruce M. Metzger, published by the United Bible Societies, pp. 259-272.

II. AUTHOR

- A. The book is anonymous, but Luke is strongly implied.
 1. The unique and surprising “we” sections, [Acts 16:10–17](#) (second missionary journey at Philippi); [Acts 20:5–15](#); [Acts 21:1–18](#) (end of third missionary journey) and [Acts 27:1–28:16](#) (Paul sent as prisoner to Rome) strongly imply Luke as the author.
 2. The connection between the third Gospel and Acts is obvious when one compares [Luke 1:1–4](#) with [Acts 1:1–2](#).
 3. The mention of a Gentile physician in [Colossians 4:10–14](#), [Philemon 24](#), and [2 Timothy 4:11](#) implies Luke, the only Gentile writer in the NT.
 4. The unanimous witness of the early church
 - a. the **Muratorian Canon Fragment** (A.D. 180–200 from Rome says, “compiled by Luke the physician”)
 - b. (A.D. 130–200)
 - c. the writings of **Clement of Alexandria** (A.D. 156–215)
 - d. the writings of **Tertullian** (A.D. 160–200)
 - e. the writings of **Origen** (A.D. 185–254)
 5. The internal evidence of style and vocabulary (especially medical terms) confirms Luke as the author (i.e. Sir William Ramsay and A. Harnack).