

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, The Theology of Luke-Acts, Session 11, Acts Bibliography, F.F. Bruce Acts in the New Testament, Origin and Purpose of Acts, Paul in Acts

This is Dr. Robert A. Peterson in his teaching on the Theology of Luke-Acts. This is session 11, Acts Bibliography, F.F. Bruce, Acts in the New Testament, Origin and Purpose of Acts, Paul in Acts.

We continue our lectures on Luke and theology. Having completed those lectures on the Gospel of Luke, we now turn our attention to Luke's second book, the Acts of the Apostles. We should start with a bibliography. I'm going to have to look at it up on the wall there.

I've got four sources. F.F. Bruce, the famous New Testament scholar, now with the Lord, actually was a classic scholar and wrote a commentary on Acts loaded with classical references that got him hired at the University of Manchester in Great Britain, from which post he became a leader in evangelicalism and trained scores of evangelical New Testament scholars that helped bring about an evangelical reformation around the world, especially in the United States and had a tremendous impact. Then, later on, as a much more mature New Testament scholar, their first Acts commentary represented his move from the classics to the New Testament.

He wrote this new international commentary on the New Testament, the Book of Acts. It's still undergirded by the scholarship of the previous commentary, but now it takes a theological turn and is attuned to the message of Acts and the theology of Paul communicated through Acts. Dennis Johnson, professor of New Testament, and now I think of practical theology, perhaps homiletics, at Westminster Seminary in California, has. Everything he writes is solid, orthodox, and very helpful.

This is no exception: the message of Acts. It is not a complete commentary; it is selective, but it is so, so helpful. It just points us in the right direction and helps us in so many ways.

Howard Marshall, again, in some ways F.F. Bruce's successor as a leader in training evangelical New Testament scholars. He wrote the Book of Acts in the Tyndale New Testament commentary series. The replacement volume, they've replaced those so that they're much more substantial.

It's actually good and bad. The Tyndale before the replacement volumes were my first recommendation for garden variety Christians who don't have professional training, who want to go on and study the Bible in more detail because they're not

in-depth, but as the consensus says, they're even, which is very unusual in a commentary series. They're orthodox, they're textual, they don't deal with every sentence, but basically every paragraph in the New Testament, and even larger units, of course, in the older, bigger Old Testament books.

But the replacement volumes are more academic and helpful, and for those, for scholars and pastors and so forth, the Howard Marshall Book on Acts is really very good indeed. And this third, this fourth thing is just spectacular, beyond human can. Seriously, my notes again, this time on the people of God or the church, not in Luke, but this time in Acts, Luke's second volume.

So, F.F. Bruce, Book of Acts, New International Commentary on the New Testament. By way of introduction, he talks about Acts in the New Testament, the origin and purpose of Acts, and then Paul in Acts. My very first appointment was as an instructor in New Testament.

The very second year of the school graciously promoted me to assistant professor of New Testament and theology. That was at Old Biblical Theological Seminary in Hatfield, Pennsylvania, which no longer exists in that form. I went on years later to teach at Covenant Seminary in St. Louis for 25 years as a professor of systematic theology.

However, the exegetical grounding that I received at Biblical as a student and then as a half-professor of the New Testament and half of theology for those 10 years was invaluable in my own development. And Bruce helped me so much. Perhaps he's been bypassed by specialists in the particular Pauline books in which he wrote, but still, his stuff is solid. It is helpful.

Acts in the New Testament. The Acts of the Apostles is the name given since about the middle of the second century A.D. to the second volume of A History of Christian Origins, composed by a first-century Christian and dedicated to a certain Theophilus. The first volume of this history is also extant as one of the 27 documents included in the New Testament canon.

It is the work ordinarily known as the Gospel, according to St. Luke. Originally, no doubt, these two volumes circulated together as one complete and independent work, but not for long. From about the end of the beginning of the second, quite soon, in fact, after the publication of John's Gospel, the four canonical Gospels were gathered together into one collection and began to circulate as the fourfold Gospel.

This meant that the first volume of our twofold history was detached from the second and attached to three works by other writers, which covered more or less the same ground relating the story of Jesus and ending with an account of his resurrection. The second volume, therefore, was left to pursue a career of its own,

but an important and influential career as it proved. Of course, he's talking about the Book of Acts.

About the same time as the four Gospels were gathered together to form one collection, another collection of Christian documents was taking shape, the collection of the Pauline Epistles. These two collections, the Gospel and the Apostle, as they were called, make up the greater part of the New Testament. But there would be a hiatus between these two collections were it not for the second volume of the history of Christian origins, the document which we shall briefly refer to as Acts.

Acts played an indispensable part in relating the two collections to each other. As regards the first collection, Acts forms its general sequel as it was from the first, the proper sequel, to one of the four documents in that collection, the third Gospel. As regards the second collection, Acts provides the narrative background against which the writings of Paul can more readily be understood.

More importantly, still, Acts provides clear and convincing evidence for the validity of the apostolic claim that Paul makes for himself in his letters. The importance of Acts was further underlined in the middle of the second century as a result of the dispute in which Marcion and his teaching gave rise. Marcion, about A.D. 144, promulgated at Rome a revolutionary doctrine that maintained that Christ was the revealer of an entirely new religion, completely unrelated to anything that had preceded his coming, such as the revelation to Israel in the Old Testament, and that Paul was the only apostle of Christ who faithfully preserved this new religion in its purity, that means uncontaminated, by Old Testament or Jewish influence.

Marcion drew up what he believed to be the true canon of divine scripture for the new age. This canon comprised two parts, one called the Gospel, a suitably expurgated recension of the Third Gospel, and the other called the Apostle. Marcion's The Gospel was constituted by our Gospel of Luke, with many references to the Old Testament and Judaism removed.

Also in Marcion's canon was the Apostle, a similarly edited recension of Paul's nine letters to churches and his letter to Philemon. The publication of Marcion's canon was a challenge and stimulus to the Roman church and the other churches which adhered to the Catholic small-c faith. It did not compel them to create the canon of Holy Scripture, which has ever since, with minor variations, been accepted by the church catholic, but it did compel them to define that canon with greater precision.

For them, the New Testament canon did not supersede that of the Old Testament but stood alongside it as a divinely ordained complement. For them, the Gospel comprised not one document but four, and these four included the true text of the one which Marcion had published in a garbled form. For them, the Apostle included

not ten but thirteen Pauline epistles, and not only epistles of Paul but epistles of other apostolic men as well.

And linking the Gospel and the Apostle together, Acts now seemed to have greater importance than ever, for not only did it present irrefragable proof of Paul's apostleship, but it provided evidence of the apostleship of the other apostles too, those whom Marcion had repudiated as false apostles and corruptors of the truth as he found it in Jesus. The pivotal position of Acts in the Christian canon was now appreciated as it could not have been before. One token of this appreciation is the place occupied by Acts between the Gospel and the Apostle from that day to this.

Another is the title by which it has been known ever since. The Acts of the Apostles. So far as extant evidence goes, it first receives this title in the Anti-Marcionite Prologue to the Third Gospel, a document to be dated perhaps between AD 150 and 180, which is also probably the earliest extant document ascribing the authorship of the two volumes to Luke, the physician of Antioch.

The title of the Acts of the Apostles may have been intended to point out that Paul was not the only faithful apostle of Christ, even if much more is said about him than the others in Acts. This point is emphasized to an exaggerated degree in another document emanating from Orthodox circles in Rome late in the second century, the Muratorian Canon of Sacred Books, where the volume is called the Acts of the Apostles. The Muratorian Canon was so called because it was discovered by Cardinal L.A. Muratori in 1740.

Origin and purpose of Acts. The important part played by Acts in the middle of the second century has suggested to a number of scholars that its final form, at any rate, in its final form, it was composed about that time in order to play that part. Against this view, two considerations tell with special weight.

In the first place, the historical, geographical, and political atmosphere of Luke-Acts as a whole and of Acts in particular is unmistakably that of the first century and not of the second. In the second place, the internal evidence of the work does not suggest that its primary purpose was to vindicate the apostleship of Paul to show that the other apostles were as faithful as he was or to represent Paul and the other apostles as being on terms of complete mutual respect and harmony. It did, to be sure, serve these purposes in due course, but these are not the main emphases of Acts.

The primary purpose of Acts cannot be considered in isolation from the purpose of the former treatise, the Gospel of Luke, of which it is the continuation. The two parts are one integral whole with a consistent, coherent purpose running throughout. And we're not left to speculate what that purpose might be.

It is stated for us explicitly at the very outset of the twofold work. Here it is in the words of the author himself, Luke 1:1 to 4 from the revised standard version. In as much as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us, just as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed.

Luke 1:1 to 4 RSV. In these words, Luke sets out the purpose, not only of the third Gospel, but of the whole work of which that gospel was the first volume. He himself, it appears, could not claim to be an eyewitness of the earlier events recorded in his history, but he had access to the information which such eyewitnesses could supply.

He was not the first to draw up an account based on information of this kind, but he claims for his account that it rests upon thorough and accurate research and that it is arranged in a proper sequence. Let it be said briefly here that throughout this commentary, Bruce is referring to his NICNT on the book of Acts, the Luke, and authorship of the twofold work is accepted. The external evidence for Luke and authorship goes back to the early decades of the second century, beyond the moratorium list and the anti-Marcionite prologues.

While the original text of Luke-Acts does not reveal the author's name, the belief in Luke and authorship found its way at an early date into one or two recensions of the text of Acts, as the exposition and notes in chapters 1128 and 2013 will show. The evidence of the New Testament writings in general, and of Luke-Acts in particular, does not conflict with the external evidence, and in fact, the work itself shows conflict with the external evidence, and in fact, excuse me, shows signs it does the work itself. I'm going to do that sentence again.

The evidence of the New Testament writings in general, and of Luke-Acts in particular, does not conflict with the external evidence, and in fact, the work itself shows signs of having been composed by someone who was from time to time a companion of Paul and who traveled with him to Rome, where we know Luke to have been in his company. See Colossians 4.4 and Philemon 24. When some parts of the narrative of Acts dealing with journeys made by Paul and a few of his friends are cast in the first-person plural, whence they are known as the "we" sections, the most reasonable inference is that the author of the whole work was present with Paul on those particular journeys.

Luke then announces that his purpose in writing his history was to give a certain Theophilus an accurate and orderly account of the origins of Christianity, about which Theophilus had some information already. For the later part of the narrative,

he would draw largely on his own experiences. For the earlier part, he could depend on reliable firsthand informants.

His first volume is, in essence, a record of the apostolic witness to Jesus' ministry of word, deed, suffering, and triumph. His second volume takes up the tale after the resurrection of Jesus and carries it on for some 30 years. He traces the progress of Christianity from Judea to Rome and ends with the chief herald of the gospel proclaiming it at the heart of the empire, with the full acquiescence of the imperial authorities.

When we examine the way in which Luke develops his narrative, we can hardly fail to be struck by his apologetic emphasis, especially in the second volume. He's concerned with defending Christianity against the charges that were popularly, not properly, brought against it in the second half of the first century. We must recognize that in the eyes of those who set some store by law and order in the Roman empire, Christianity started off with a serious mishap, a serious handicap.

Its founder has admittedly been condemned to death by a Roman governor on a charge of sedition, and the movement which he inaugurated seemed to be attended by tumult and disorder wherever it spread, both in the Roman provinces and in Rome itself. Luke sets himself to reduce this handicap or rather to remove it altogether. The crucifixion of Christ is presented as a gross miscarriage of justice.

True, he was accused of sedition before Pontius Pilate, but Pilate pronounced him not guilty of the charges, and Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee, agreed that there was no substance to them. Luke 23 verses 13 and following. It was the influence of the chief priests of Jerusalem and the clamor of the city mob incited by them that compelled Pilate, against his own judgment, to pass the death sentence which they demanded.

Similarly, in Acts, a variety of officials, Gentile and Jewish, show goodwill toward Paul and other Christian missionaries or at least admit that there's no basis for the accusations brought against them by their opponents. In Cyprus, the distinguished pro-council of the island is favorably impressed by the apostles and their message. Chapter 13:7, and 12.

Acts 13:7, he's called, speaks of a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus. He was with the pro-council Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. Verse 12, then the pro-council believed when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

The teaching of the Lord combined with what he saw, that is, Paul curses the false prophet and causes him to be blind temporarily as the man had opposed the gospel, and that was enough to elicit Paul's response of judgment from God. Again,

temporary judgment from God. At Philippi, the chief collegiate magistrates of the colony apologized to Paul and Silas for their illegal beating and imprisonment.

Chapter 16:37 and following. You remember what happened. Paul cast a demon out of a slave girl.

The people were incited, had Paul arrested and Silas beaten, and placed in stocks. God brought an earthquake, freed them miraculously, and apparently, the people stayed in the prison. They didn't run away.

Paul and Silas assured the jailer who was going to kill himself since he protected his prisoners on the penalty of his life if they escaped, and we're all here. Don't do that. He asked what he must do to be saved.

I'm not sure exactly what his question meant, but we know what Paul's intention was in his response. Believe in the Lord Jesus, you'll be saved, you and your household, your family. Anyway, he believed that he was baptized, and the magistrates, in verse 36, when it was day, sent the police saying let those men go, and the jailer reported those words to Paul saying the magistrates have sent to let you go therefore come out now and go in peace, but Paul said to them they have beaten us publicly, uncondemned men who are Roman citizens and have thrown us into prison and do they now throw us out secretly? No, let them come themselves and take us out.

The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens, so they came and apologized to them, took them out, and asked them to leave the city. Oh, at Corinth, that was chapter 16 of Acts 37 and following, at Corinth Galio, the pro-council of Achaia, decrees that the charges brought by the local Jewish community against Paul and his colleagues relate to internal matters of Jewish religion and pronounces them guiltless of any offense against Roman law. That's Romans, sorry, Acts 18:12 and following.

But when Galio, the pro-council of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, saying this man was persuading people to worship God contrary to the law. But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Galio said to the Jews, if it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, oh Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint. But since it's a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves.

I refuse to be a judge of these things. And he drove them from the tribunal. Oh, Acts 18:12 and following.

At Ephesus, the Asiarchs, leading citizens of the province of Asia, are Paul's friends. And the chief executive officer of the city administration absolves him of the charge of public sacrilege. 19:31, 35 and following.

And even some of the Asiarchs, who were friends of his, sent to him and were urging him not to venture into the theater. And when the town clerk had quieted the crowd who were calling out great is Artemis of the Ephesians and wanting to do Paul in, town clerk had quieted the crowd. He said, men of Ephesus, who is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is the temple keeper of the great Artemis? It was one of the wonders of the ancient world, the great temple, and of the sacred stone that fell from the sky.

Seeing then that these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash, for you brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess. If, therefore, Demetrius and the craftsmen with him have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open, and there are pro councils.

Let them bring charges against one another. But if you think, seek anything further, it shall be settled in a regular assembly. For we really are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there's no cause that we can give to justify this commotion.

And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly. In Palestine, the procurators Felix and Festus successively find Paul innocent of the serious crimes of which the Sanhedrin accused him. The Jewish client, King Herod Agrippa II, and his sister Bernice agree that he has done nothing deserving of death or even imprisonment.

Acts 24:1 through 26:32. And when he appeals as a Roman citizen to have his case heard by the emperor in Rome, he carries on his missionary activity for two years in that city under constant surveillance without anyone trying to hinder him. Acts 28, verses 30 and 31.

Paul lived there for two whole years at his own expense and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching them about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance. The very last words of the acts of the apostles. If Christianity were such a lawless movement, as was widely believed, Paul would certainly not have been allowed to propagate it by the imperial guards in whose charge he was.

How, then, it might be asked, was the advance of Christianity attended to by so much strife and disorder? Luke arraigns the Jewish authorities as responsible for this. It was the Jerusalem Sanhedrin who prosecuted Jesus before Pilate and Paul before Felix and Festus. Most of the disturbances that broke out when the gospel was proclaimed in the Roman provinces were fomented by the local Jewish communities who refused to accept the gospel themselves and were annoyed when their Gentile neighbors believed it.

We have then to look for an appropriate life setting for a work that strikes the apologetic note in just this way. Over and over again, Luke shows Christianity was not lawless. It was rather lawful and respectful of Roman law.

This was to appeal to Theophilus and all other listeners and readers of the book of Acts. One attractive suggestion recently made points to the period AD 66 to 70 when the chief accusers of Christianity, the Jewish authorities in Palestine, so completely discredited themselves in Roman eyes by the rebellion against the empire. In those years, it would have been especially effective to emphasize that, unlike the rebellious Jews, Christians were not disloyal to the empire.

That, in fact, the Jewish authorities themselves had always done their best to disown Christianity. I have great respect for FF Bruce but I do not think that that thesis has won the day in the time past his writing of this good commentary. Certainly, there's nothing in Acts or even Luke that presupposes the destruction of the city in the Temple of Jerusalem AD 70 as having taken place before the time of writing.

But there was another event that took place a few years previously, which we should have expected to be reflected fairly clearly in an apologetic document written not long afterward. That was the persecution of the Christians of Rome, which followed the great fire of AD 64. This marked the end of the official policy, which Paul had found so helpful in the 50s.

For Luke to relate decisions of imperial officials favorable to Christianity in the years preceding AD 60 might well appear irrelevant when everybody knew the complete reversal of those decisions in which Nero's action in the 60s involved. To be sure, at the end of Nero's reign in AD 68, the relation of these favorable verdicts might have been intended to suggest that Nero's anti-Christian policy was an irresponsible and criminal attack by that discredited monarch in person upon a movement whose innocence had been amply attested by many worthy representatives of the Roman authority. But there's really no hint in Acts that Nero's anti-Christian policy had yet manifested itself as it did in the year 64.

The fact that the death of Paul seems like a good argument to me the fact that the death of Paul, which traditionally was an incident of the Neronian persecution, is not mentioned in Acts is not decisive for the dating of the book for Luke's purpose is accomplished when he had brought Paul to Rome. But if, in fact, Paul had been condemned and executed before Acts was written, we might have expected a rather different atmosphere and emphasis in the book, especially at the end, from that which we actually find. It is better to suppose that when Acts was written, Christianity was suspect but not yet proscribed.

If we can date Luke's history a little earlier than the persecution of 64, we find a reasonable life setting for the work. Paul's arrival in Rome, his apostolic witness

there for two years, the legal procedure occasioned by his appeal to Caesar must have brought Christianity to the notice of all Roman of the Roman middle classes. Previously, if they knew of it at all, they thought of it as one more of those despicable eastern cults that infected the lower orders of the city as the sewers of the Orontes discharged themselves into the Tiber.

But Paul's case may have moved some to take a little more interest in Christianity. If Theophilus was a representative of the intelligent reading public or rather listening public of Rome, here was Luke's opportunity to provide such people with a more accurate account of the rise and progress of Christianity than they were likely to get elsewhere and also to vindicate the innocence of Paul and other Christians in relation to Roman law. Luke's narrative as such cannot have been directed directly intended to serve as the evidence for the defense when Paul's appeal came up for hearing in the imperial court.

Some of the imperial material included in it would have been useful for that purpose, but there's much in Luke that would be forensically quite irrelevant. We may think, for example, of the details of the voyage and shipwreck in chapter 27 or the emphasis throughout on the dominant role of the Holy Spirit. Would this emphasis on the Holy Spirit have been equally irrelevant for the intelligent Roman public whom Luke had in view? To most of them, it would have meant little, but Theophilus himself may well have been a convert to the new faith.

In any case, Luke wishes to make it clear that the progress of this faith was no mere question of human planning. It was controlled by a divine agency. In one way, this may have contributed to Luke's apologetic purpose, although it would not have been of much use as a plea in a Roman law court.

Luke is, in fact, one of the first Christian apologists in that particular type of apologetics, which is addressed to the secular authorities to establish the law-abiding character of Christianity. He is absolutely the pioneer, but other forms of apologetic appear in the course of his work, especially in some of the speeches of Acts. Thus, Stephen's speech in chapter 7 is the prototype of Christian apologetics against the Jews designed to demonstrate that Christianity and not Judaism is the true fulfillment of the revelation given through Moses and the prophets.

Similarly, Paul's speech in Athens in chapter 17 is one of the earliest examples of Christian apologetics against the pagans designed to show that the true knowledge of God is given in the gospel and not in the idolatrous vanities of paganism. Paul's speech before Agrippa in chapter 26 is, of course, the crowning apologia for his own missionary career. Paul in Acts.

Paul, in a number of his epistles, found it necessary to defend his apostolic status against those who denied it and appealed in support of his claim to the signs of an

apostle who attended his ministry. It was, of course, unnecessary for him to describe these signs in detail to people who had had firsthand experience of them, but other readers of his epistles might be uncertain of the validity of this appeal were it not for the record of Paul's apostolic labors preserved by Luke in the book of Acts. No one could read Acts and doubt the reality of Paul's call to be an apostle.

This was plain enough as early as the second century. Tertullian points out the inconsistency of those heretics, the Marcionites in particular, who rejected the authority of Acts but appealed so confidently and exclusively to the apostolic authority of Paul. Quote, you must show us first of all who this Paul was he says to them.

What was he before he became an apostle? How did he become an apostle? This is in Tertullian's prescription against heretics. It was, of course, difficult to give an adequate answer to these questions without appealing to Acts. Those who date Acts in the middle of the second century and regard it as a product of the anti-Marcionite reaction may consider that one of its aims is to show that Peter and the rest of the twelve were as much apostles as Paul which Marcion denied, but it shows even more conclusively if incidentally that Paul was as much an apostle as Peter and the rest of the twelve that, in fact, he labored more abundantly than they all.

Compare 1 Corinthians 15:10, which is exactly what he says, and in showing this, Acts may well have achieved a success considerably beyond Luke's immediate intention. There's something to be said for the view that Paul's influence declined in his Aegean mission field, especially in the province of Asia soon after he left it, and that his Judaizing adversaries won a temporary victory. This is a reasonable inference Bruce writes from 2 Timothy 1:15 and is in keeping with Paul's foreboding in Acts 20:29 and 30, but if so, it was a very temporary victory before long Paul's name and renown were firmly re-established and venerated in the areas which he had evangelized.

Two reasons may be assigned for this vindication of Paul's memory. First, the fall of Jerusalem and the disposal of the church there dealt a heavy blow to the prestige of the Judaizing party, and secondly, the circulation of Acts among the Aegean churches a more extended public than that to which Luke first addressed his history must have brought about a revival of interest in Paul. It may, in fact, as Edward J. Goodspeed suggested, have stimulated the collection of his letters into a literary corpus and their circulation among the churches, the corpus Paulinum, the Pauline corpus.

Paul, no doubt, is Luke's hero. What an ineffaceable picture he gives us of the apostle, and in giving us this picture, what a contribution he has made to the record of Christian expansion. His narrative, in fact, is a source book of the highest value for the history of civilization. It may or may not be a good thing that over so much of the world today, Christianity is looked upon as a European religion, but how does it come

about that a faith that arose in Asia should have come to be so integrally associated with European rather than with Asian civilization.

The answer is surely that in the providence of God, its leading herald, and missionary in the three decades following its inception was a Roman citizen who saw how the strategic centers and communications of the Roman empire could be turned to the service of Christ's kingdom and planted the Christian faith in those centers and along those lines of communication. "in little more than 10 years Saint Paul established a church in four provinces of the empire Galatia Macedonia Achaia and Asia. Before AD 47 there were no churches in these provinces by AD 57 Paul could speak as if his work there was done and could plan extensive tours into the far west without anxiety lest the churches which he had founded might perish in his absence for want of his guidance and support."

Roland Allen missionary methods Saint Paul or ours and Luke is the historian of this enterprise one of the most far-reaching in human history in world history. He shows plainly how it was done. generally speaking, Paul's activity was based on certain centers from which he undertook his longer and shorter journeys and which, in the course of years, was transferred from one province to another, that's from Martin Dibelius's Paul book translated into English in 1953. The first of these centers was Damascus, from which Paul penetrated Nabataean Arabia. He would have made his next center Jerusalem had he not been warned in a vision not to settle there Acts 22:17 through 21. He went back, therefore, to his native Tarsus, and from that center, he preached the gospel in Cilicia and Syria Cilicia and Syria for the best part of 10 unchronicled years. Then, for shorter or longer periods, his successive centers were Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome.

Something of his achievements as he worked in one after another of these centers and preached the gospel as he journeyed on the roads from one to the other may be gathered from allusions in his epistles but it is Luke that we have to thank for the coherent record of Paul's apostolic activity without it we should be incalculably poorer even with it there's much in Paul's letters that we have difficulty in understanding how much more there would be if we had no book of Acts.

F.F. Bruce concludes this introductory chapter to his commentary on Acts with two prayers: oh God, who, through the preaching of the blessed apostle Saint Paul, has caused the lay of the gospel to shine throughout the world. Grant we beseech thee that we having his wonderful conversion and remembrance may show forth our thankfulness for the same by following the holy doctrine which he taught through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

And one more prayer: Almighty God, who calls Luke the physician whose praise is in the gospel, to be an evangelist and physician of the soul, may it please thee that by

the wholesome medicines of the doctrines delivered by him all the diseases of our souls may be healed through the merits of thy son Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

What a delightful way to end. In our next lecture we'll look at Dennis Johnson's helpful writings on the message of Acts.

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