

Dr. Robert Peterson, Theology of Luke-Acts, Session 11, F. F. Bruce – Acts in NT, Origin & Purpose, Paul in Acts Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Peterson, Theology of Luke-Acts, Session 11, F. F. Bruce – Acts in NT, Origin & Purpose, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Robert A. Peterson introduces his lecture on **Luke-Acts** by presenting a bibliography of significant resources for studying the **Book of Acts**. He highlights **F.F. Bruce's** commentaries, emphasizing the shift from classical influences to theological insights in his later work. Peterson also recommends **Dennis Johnson's** concise yet helpful overview of Acts' message and **Howard Marshall's** commentary in the Tyndale series, noting its academic value. Furthermore, the lecture touches upon the historical context and **apologetic purpose of Acts**, particularly in relation to Roman law and the defense of Paul's apostleship.

**2. 12 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Peterson, Theology of Luke-Acts, Session 11 – Double click
icon to play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (New Testament → Gospels → Luke).**



**Peterson_Theo_LkA
cts_Session11.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Peterson, Theology of Luke-Acts, Session 11, F. F. Bruce – Acts in NT, Origin & Purpose

Briefing Document: F.F. Bruce on the Book of Acts

Main Themes:

This briefing document summarizes the key ideas and insights from Dr. Robert A. Peterson's lecture (Session 11 of "The Theology of Luke-Acts") focusing on the work of the prominent New Testament scholar F.F. Bruce regarding the Book of Acts. The main themes explored are:

- **The Significance of Acts within the New Testament Canon:** Bruce emphasizes Acts' crucial role in bridging the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles, providing historical context and validating Paul's apostleship.
- **The Authorship and Early Reception of Luke-Acts:** Bruce supports the traditional view of Luke as the author of both the Gospel of Luke and Acts, highlighting the early recognition of this two-volume work as a history of Christian origins.
- **The Origin and Purpose of Acts:** Bruce argues against the notion that Acts was primarily written in response to mid-second-century controversies like Marcionism. Instead, he posits that its primary purpose, consistent with the Gospel of Luke, is to provide Theophilus (and a wider audience) with an accurate and orderly account of the beginnings of Christianity.
- **The Apologetic Nature of Acts:** Bruce identifies a strong apologetic element in Acts, aimed at defending Christianity against charges of lawlessness and sedition within the Roman Empire. Luke portrays Roman officials as often finding Christian missionaries innocent of wrongdoing.
- **The Central Role of Paul in Acts:** Bruce highlights Luke's portrayal of Paul as a key figure in the expansion of Christianity, emphasizing the importance of Acts in understanding Paul's apostolic ministry and its impact on the early church.

Most Important Ideas and Facts:

- **Acts as a Bridge:** Bruce underscores that Acts "played an indispensable part in relating the two collections [Gospel and Apostle] to each other." It acts as a sequel to Luke's Gospel and provides the narrative backdrop for understanding Paul's letters.

- **Response to Marcion:** While acknowledging the impact of Marcion's challenge in the mid-second century, Bruce contends that the primary purpose of Acts was not solely to counter Marcionism. However, he notes that Acts did serve to demonstrate the validity of Paul's apostleship and the apostleship of others whom Marcion rejected. As Peterson quotes, "for not only did it present irrefragable proof of Paul's apostleship, but it provided evidence of the apostleship of the other apostles too..."
- **Luke's Stated Purpose:** Bruce emphasizes Luke's own declaration of purpose in Luke 1:1-4, which applies to both volumes: "...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." This highlights Luke's intention to provide an accurate and researched historical narrative.
- **Apologetic Aim:** Bruce argues that Luke is concerned with "defending Christianity against the charges that were popularly, not properly, brought against it in the second half of the first century." He illustrates this with numerous examples in Acts where Roman officials show favor to or acquit Paul and other Christians, suggesting Christianity was not a lawless movement. For instance, regarding Gallio, Peterson quotes, "'Gallio, 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.'"
- **Paul as Luke's Hero:** Bruce views Paul as the central figure in Acts, noting that Luke provides an "ineffaceable picture" of him and his missionary endeavors. This portrayal is crucial for understanding the spread of Christianity and for validating Paul's apostolic authority, especially in light of those who questioned it. Tertullian's observation, quoted by Peterson, highlights this: "'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?'" These questions could only be adequately answered by referring to the narrative in Acts.
- **Impact of Paul's Ministry:** Bruce highlights the historical significance of Paul's work, stating that "in little more than 10 years Saint Paul established a church in four provinces of the empire Galatia Macedonia Achaia and Asia." Luke's account is therefore seen as a "source book of the highest value for the history of civilization."

- **Dating of Acts:** While acknowledging the suggestion that Acts might have been written after the Jewish revolt (AD 66-70), Bruce finds no explicit indication of this event within the text. He leans towards a slightly earlier dating, before the full force of Nero's persecution in AD 64, noting that the lack of mention of Paul's martyrdom in Rome is suggestive, though not definitive.

Quotes:

- "Acts played an indispensable part in relating the two collections to each other."
- "...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 1:3-4 RSV)
- "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."
- "'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.'" (referring to Acts 18:12ff)
- "'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?'" (quoting Tertullian)
- "in little more than 10 years Saint Paul established a church in four provinces of the empire Galatia Macedonia Achaia and Asia."

Conclusion:

F.F. Bruce's analysis, as presented by Dr. Peterson, underscores the foundational importance of the Book of Acts for understanding the origins and early development of Christianity. Bruce highlights its crucial role in the New Testament canon, its apologetic aims in addressing contemporary criticisms, and its invaluable contribution to our understanding of Paul's pivotal ministry and the geographical spread of the early church. His work emphasizes the historical reliability and theological significance of Luke's second volume.

4. Study Guide: Peterson, Theology of Luke-Acts, Session 11, F. Bruce – Acts in NT, Origin & Purpose

Study Guide: The Theology of Luke-Acts - Session 11

Key Concepts and Themes

- **Acts as a Sequel:** Understand Acts as the second volume of a unified work with the Gospel of Luke, both addressed to Theophilus.
- **Authorship and Date:** Review the evidence supporting Luke as the author and the likely time of writing (pre-64 A.D., before the Neronian persecution).
- **Purpose of Luke-Acts:** Identify the primary purpose as providing Theophilus (and other readers/listeners) with an accurate and orderly account of the origins and progress of Christianity.
- **Apologetic Emphasis:** Recognize Luke's aim to defend Christianity against accusations of lawlessness and sedition within the Roman Empire.
- **Paul's Role in Acts:** Understand how Acts portrays Paul's apostolic ministry and its significance in linking the Gospel narratives to the Pauline Epistles.
- **Acts and the Canon:** Grasp the historical importance of Acts in the development of the New Testament canon, particularly in response to Marcionism.
- **The "We" Sections:** Recall the significance of the first-person plural passages in Acts as potential indicators of Luke's companionship with Paul.
- **Geographic Progression:** Trace the movement of the Christian message from Jerusalem to Rome as depicted in Acts.
- **The Holy Spirit's Role:** Note the importance of divine agency and the Holy Spirit in the expansion of Christianity according to Luke.
- **Different Forms of Apologetics:** Distinguish between Luke's apologetic to secular authorities, Stephen's apologetic to the Jews, and Paul's apologetic to pagans.

Quiz

1. According to the text, what is the relationship between the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts? How did their circulation change early in Christian history?
2. Who is Theophilus, and what does Luke explicitly state as his purpose in writing the two-volume work addressed to him?

3. Summarize F.F. Bruce's background and his contribution to the study of Acts, highlighting the shift in emphasis between his earlier and later commentaries.
4. Explain the challenge posed by Marcion's teachings and canon, and describe how the Book of Acts played a crucial role in the orthodox response.
5. What evidence within the text suggests that the author of Luke-Acts was likely a companion of the Apostle Paul? What are the "we" sections?
6. Describe Luke's apologetic aim in the Book of Acts. Provide two specific examples from the text where Roman officials show favor or acknowledge the innocence of Christians.
7. According to the text, why is the fact that Paul's death is not mentioned in Acts not necessarily a definitive argument for dating the book? What alternative timing is suggested?
8. How does the text explain the transition of Christianity from being perceived as an Asian religion to one closely associated with European civilization?
9. What does the text suggest as potential reasons for the later re-establishment and veneration of Paul's name and influence in the Aegean region?
10. Briefly outline the initial centers of Paul's missionary activity as described in the text, leading up to his arrival in Rome.

Answer Key

1. Acts is the second volume and a direct sequel to the Gospel of Luke, forming one integral work originally intended to circulate together. However, relatively soon after the publication of John's Gospel, the four canonical Gospels were collected separately, detaching Luke from Acts, which then pursued its own independent, yet influential, path.
2. Theophilus is addressed as "most excellent," suggesting he was a person of some status, possibly a Roman official or a patron. Luke states his purpose is to provide Theophilus with an accurate and orderly account of the origins of Christianity, so that he may know the truth concerning the things he had already been informed about.
3. F.F. Bruce was a renowned evangelical New Testament scholar initially known for his commentary on Acts loaded with classical references, which led to his position at the University of Manchester. His later New International Commentary on Acts

built upon this scholarship but took a more theological turn, focusing on the message of Acts and the theology of Paul within it.

4. Marcion taught that Christ revealed a completely new religion unrelated to the Old Testament and that Paul was his only true apostle. His canon included an edited version of Luke's Gospel and some of Paul's letters. Acts became crucial in the orthodox response by demonstrating the apostleship of Peter and the others, linking them with Paul and the Old Testament context, thus validating a broader canon.
5. The "we" sections, passages in Acts where the narrative shifts to the first-person plural, suggest the author was present with Paul during those particular journeys. This internal evidence aligns with external traditions identifying Luke as a companion of Paul who traveled with him to Rome, as mentioned in Colossians and Philemon.
6. Luke's apologetic aim is to demonstrate to Theophilus and other readers that Christianity was not a lawless or seditious movement that threatened the Roman Empire. Examples include the proconsul of Cyprus, Sergius Paulus, being favorably impressed (Acts 13), and Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia, decreeing that accusations against Paul were internal Jewish matters, not Roman offenses (Acts 18).
7. The fact that Paul's death isn't mentioned is not decisive because Luke's stated purpose was accomplished once he brought Paul to Rome and showed him proclaiming the gospel unhindered. The text suggests a dating of Luke-Acts a little earlier than the persecution of 64 A.D., as the favorable treatment of Christians by Roman officials before this time would have been relevant then.
8. The text argues that in the providence of God, Paul, a Roman citizen, became the leading missionary in the decades following Christianity's inception. He strategically planted churches in key centers and along Roman communication lines, effectively associating the faith with the Roman Empire and, subsequently, European civilization.
9. The fall of Jerusalem diminished the prestige of the Judaizing party, who opposed Paul. Additionally, the wider circulation of the Book of Acts among the Aegean churches likely revived interest in Paul and his ministry, possibly even stimulating the collection and circulation of his letters.

10. Paul's initial centers of activity included Damascus, from which he went to Nabataean Arabia. After being warned not to settle in Jerusalem, he returned to his native Tarsus, from where he preached in Cilicia and Syria for about ten years. His subsequent major centers were Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, and finally Rome.

Essay Format Questions

1. Analyze the various apologetic strategies employed by Luke in the Book of Acts. How do these strategies cater to different audiences (Roman authorities, Jews, pagans)?
2. Discuss the significance of Paul's portrayal in the Book of Acts for understanding his apostolic authority and his relationship with the other apostles.
3. Evaluate the evidence presented in the text for dating the Book of Acts. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments for a pre-64 A.D. composition?
4. Explore the stated purpose of Luke-Acts as outlined in Luke 1:1-4. How does the content of the Book of Acts fulfill this purpose for Theophilus and a wider readership?
5. Consider the role of the Holy Spirit in the narrative of Acts. How does Luke's emphasis on divine agency contribute to his overall theological and apologetic aims?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Apologetic:** A reasoned defense or justification of a belief, doctrine, or practice. In the context of Acts, it refers to Luke's defense of Christianity.
- **Apostle:** One of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ or others (like Paul and Barnabas) who were specially chosen and sent out to preach the gospel.
- **Canon:** A collection of books recognized as authoritative and divinely inspired Scripture. The New Testament canon developed over time.
- **Epistle:** A letter, particularly one of the letters included in the New Testament, written by apostles or their associates to churches or individuals.
- **Evangelicalism:** A Protestant movement that emphasizes the experience of conversion, the authority of Scripture, and the importance of evangelization.
- **Exegesis:** The critical interpretation and explanation of a text, especially of Scripture.

- **Hellenistic:** Relating to Greek culture, history, or language after the time of Alexander the Great.
- **Homiletics:** The art of preaching or writing sermons.
- **Judaizing Party:** In the early church, a group of Jewish Christians who believed that Gentile converts also needed to follow Jewish law and customs.
- **Marcionism:** A second-century Christian heresy founded by Marcion, who rejected the Old Testament and much of the New Testament, advocating for a radical separation between the God of the Old Testament and the God revealed by Jesus.
- **Muratorian Canon:** The oldest known list of New Testament books, dating from the late second century A.D.
- **Orthodox:** Conforming to what is generally or traditionally accepted as right or true, especially in religious belief.
- **Paganism:** A term used (often by Christians) to refer to religions other than Christianity, Judaism, or Islam, typically involving multiple gods and idols.
- **Proconsul:** A governor of a Roman province.
- **Recension:** A revised version of a text.
- **Sanhedrin:** The supreme Jewish council in ancient Jerusalem.
- **Sedition:** Conduct or speech inciting people to rebel against the authority of a state or monarch.
- **Theology:** The study of the nature of God and religious belief.
- **Theophilus:** The individual to whom both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts are addressed.
- **Vindication:** The action of clearing someone of blame or suspicion; proof that something is true, right, or reasonable.

5. FAQs on Peterson, Theology of Luke-Acts, Session 11, F. F. Bruce – Acts in NT, Origin & Purpose, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on the Theology of Luke-Acts (Based on Peterson's Lecture)

1. Who was F.F. Bruce and why are his works on Acts significant?

F.F. Bruce was a renowned evangelical New Testament scholar. His commentary on Acts, initially emphasizing classical references, helped secure him a position at the University of Manchester and subsequently made him a leading figure in evangelicalism, training many influential scholars. His later "New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Book of Acts" built upon his earlier work but took a more theological approach, focusing on the message of Acts and the theology of Paul as presented therein. Bruce's scholarship is considered solid and very helpful for understanding the historical and theological contexts of Acts.

2. According to Luke's own words in Luke 1:1-4, what was the primary purpose of his two-volume work (Luke-Acts)?

Luke states his purpose was to provide an "orderly account" for Theophilus so that he might "know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed." This indicates that Luke aimed to give Theophilus, and by extension other readers, a reliable and structured history of the origins and development of Christianity, based on thorough research and eyewitness accounts.

3. How does the Book of Acts function as a bridge between the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles in the New Testament canon?

Acts serves as a vital link by providing the historical narrative that follows the events of the Gospels, particularly the Gospel of Luke, and precedes the letters of Paul. It explains how the early Christian movement expanded after Jesus' resurrection and ascension, tracing its progress from Jerusalem to Rome. Furthermore, Acts offers the biographical and historical context necessary for a better understanding of Paul's life, ministry, and the circumstances under which his letters were written, thereby validating his apostolic claims.

4. What apologetic aims did Luke have in writing the Book of Acts, particularly in relation to the Roman authorities?

Luke's Acts has a strong apologetic emphasis, seeking to defend Christianity against common accusations in the first century. He portrays the crucifixion of Jesus as a miscarriage of justice instigated by Jewish authorities, and he consistently highlights instances where Roman officials and even Jewish leaders find Paul and other Christians innocent of any wrongdoing against Roman law. By demonstrating that Christianity was not a lawless or seditious movement, but rather one that often received fair treatment under Roman jurisdiction, Luke aimed to appeal to figures like Theophilus and the broader Roman public.

5. How did the rise of Marcionism in the mid-second century impact the understanding and importance of the Book of Acts?

Marcion's teaching, which posited a radical separation between the God of the Old Testament and the God revealed by Christ, and which only accepted a redacted version of Luke's Gospel and some of Paul's letters as authoritative, spurred the early church to more precisely define the New Testament canon. In response to Marcion's rejection of the other apostles and the Old Testament, Acts gained increased importance as it provided evidence for the apostleship of Peter and others besides Paul, demonstrating a continuity between the Old Testament and the Christian message, and linking the Gospels and the Apostle (Paul's letters).

6. What evidence suggests that Luke, the author of Luke-Acts, was a companion of Paul?

Several "we" sections in the Book of Acts, particularly during accounts of Paul's journeys, indicate that the author was present with Paul at those times. External evidence from the New Testament letters, such as Colossians 4:14 and Philemon 24, identifies Luke as a companion of Paul, particularly during Paul's time in Rome. This aligns with the internal evidence of Acts and supports the traditional authorship of Luke for both the Gospel and the Book of Acts.

7. How does the Book of Acts portray Paul's apostolic authority and his role in the expansion of Christianity?

Acts undeniably presents Paul as a central and authoritative figure in the spread of the gospel. It recounts his dramatic conversion, his missionary journeys across the Roman Empire, the miracles and signs that accompanied his ministry, and his bold proclamation of the Christian message. By detailing Paul's labors and the positive reception he often received from both Gentiles and some Roman authorities, Acts serves to validate Paul's claim to apostleship, which he himself had to defend in his letters. Luke's narrative highlights Paul's strategic approach to evangelism, focusing on key urban centers and utilizing Roman infrastructure for the advancement of Christ's kingdom.

8. Why might the Book of Acts have concluded with Paul in Rome awaiting trial, rather than detailing his death?

The lecture suggests that Luke's primary purpose in Acts was to trace the progress of the gospel to the heart of the Roman Empire, culminating in Paul's witness in Rome itself. By ending the narrative with Paul under surveillance but freely proclaiming the gospel "without hindrance," Luke may have aimed to emphasize the initial, albeit qualified, acceptance of Christianity within the empire. Additionally, if Acts was written before Paul's martyrdom, as the absence of his death suggests, then Luke would have concluded his account at the point he had reached in his historical narrative. His goal was likely achieved by demonstrating the gospel's advance to Rome and the relative freedom Paul experienced there, thus serving his apologetic purpose of showing Christianity as not inherently subversive to Roman order.