

# Title: Authorship, Date and Genre

**Author: Dr. Craig Keener**

## Session 1

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we narratives, authorship, date, genre, historical monograph, Luke, Paul, physicians

### Abstract

This lecture serves as an introduction to the book of Acts, focusing on the key issues of its authorship, date of composition, and literary genre. Dr. Craig Keener argues that internal evidence, such as the "we" travel narratives, and unanimous external tradition support the physician Luke as the author. After exploring different potential dates of composition, Keener proposes that a date in the 70s AD is most probable, tied to the aftermath of Jerusalem's destruction and the defense of Paul's legacy. Finally, he examines the genre of Acts, aligning it with the consensus view of a historical monograph with biographic elements rather than a biography or novel.

### Outline

#### I. Introduction to the Book of Acts

- A. Narrative portrayal of the early church's mission and carrying on Jesus' commission
- B. Dual nature of Luke-Acts: Luke part two (what Jesus continued to do and teach through his followers)
- C. Utility of Acts in providing historical background for Paul's letters

#### II. Authorship of Acts

- A. The "We" Narratives
  - 1. Detail and location: Philippi, Troas, and travel till the end of the book
  - 2. The "fictitious we" hypothesis rejected
    - a. Rejection of theological differences (e.g., Paul and the law) as a basis for fictitious authorship
    - b. Fictitious first-person plural is highly atypical in ancient historical monographs
    - c. Selection of obscure insertion points suggests eyewitness presence rather than literary device
  - 3. Travel journal hypothesis
    - a. Travel journal with "we" would have been Luke's own journal
- B. Identifying the Companion

1. Potential candidates: Aristarchus (distinguished in ch. 27), Epaphras, Demas, Titus
2. Luke as the primary candidate

#### C. External Evidence

1. Unanimous early church tradition attributing authorship to Luke
2. Lack of prominence of Luke in tradition makes fabrication unlikely
3. Specific historical testimonies: anti-Marcionite prologue, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, Papyrus P75
4. Audience familiarity (Theophilus) with the author

#### D. Internal Evidence: Luke as a Physician

1. Use of medical terminology is consistent with a medical author
2. Greek slave and medical apprentice background: exposure to skilled women, Hellenistic urban education

#### E. Linguistic Style and Education

1. Popular-level educated Greek style, varying between Greek literary prose and Septuagintal style
2. Comparison to Paul's letters (rhetorical level) and Mark's grammar

#### F. Addressing Objections

1. Differences in details and theological emphases compared to Paul's letters
2. Degree of correspondence is striking, given Luke likely did not use Paul's letters as a source

#### G. Geographic and Ethnic Background

1. Deep familiarity with the Aegean region and coastal Palestine
2. Gentile or God-fearer background, heavily immersed in the Septuagint

### III. Audience and Geographic Focus

- A. Target Audience: Theophilus, a high-rank patron, and educated diaspora communities
- B. Focus on urban centers (Grecian/Aegean region, Macedonia, Hellenistic Asia, Rome) and inclusion of elites
- C. Use of the Septuagint and focus on God-fearers

### IV. Date of Acts

#### A. Early Date Arguments (c. 60s AD)

1. Focuses on why Acts does not close with Paul's death
2. Premised on Jewish influence with Rome before the year 70 AD

#### B. Middle Date Arguments (c. 70–90 AD) — The Consensus

1. Language in Luke 21 reflecting Jerusalem's destruction
2. Plot developments and theological responses to the events of 70 AD
3. Dependence on the Gospel of Mark (c. 64–75 AD) as a source

#### C. Dr. Keener's Argument for a Date in the 70s AD

1. The apologetic purpose of the captivity narratives (last quarter of Acts)
2. Defense against the charge of instigating riots (sedition)
3. Preserving and defending Paul's legacy in the immediate post-martyrdom era (70s AD)

#### D. Late Date Arguments (c. 90s AD or 2nd Century)

1. Alleged dependence on Josephus (rejected by Keener due to contradictions)
2. Marcionite / second-century theories (Tyson, Pervo) rejected as they artificially separate Luke and Acts

## **V. Genre of Acts**

### **A. Consensus of Historiography: Historical Monograph**

1. Expectations of accuracy and informative purpose
2. Contrast with ancient novels (fictional)

### **B. Biography Proposals**

1. Talbert's and Burridge's views on gospels and biography
2. Biographic focus in ancient historiography vs. formal biography

### **C. Conclusion: A Historical Monograph with a Biographic Approach**