

**Is the Book of Acts Based on Facts?  
A Study of the Historical Facts Verifying Acts**

- “For Acts the **confirmation of historicity is overwhelming**. . . . [A]ny attempt to reject its basic historicity even in matters of detail must now appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted.” [Roman historian A. N. Sherwin-White].<sup>1</sup>
- “I found myself brought into contact with the Book of Acts as an authority for the topography, antiquities and society of Asia Minor. It was gradually borne upon me that in various details the **narrative showed marvelous truth**.” [British archaeologist Sir William Ramsay].<sup>2</sup>

## **I. Overview**

Some have raised questions about the historical value of Acts. But these challenges have boomeranged, turning former skeptics into advocates for Acts’ exceptional historical reliability. This Book not only has independent sources to verify it, but it readily meets rigorous historical criteria used for testing ancient records. As a highly reliable historical source, Acts also independently verifies crucial facts in the Gospels. In short, Acts is based on facts.

This analysis focuses specifically on the evidentiary record for the book of Acts, addressing the following three issues:

- How Does Acts Corroborate the Gospels?
- What Independent Evidence Verifies the Reliability of Acts?
- How Does Acts Compare with the Historical Criteria for Ancient Sources?

## **II. How Does Acts Corroborate the Gospels?**

Acts reinforces the Gospels in two ways. First, Acts confirms core Gospel facts addressed in our prior studies, such as the existence, Resurrection, and deity of Jesus Christ. Second, as discussed in Section III below, Acts has a record for extraordinary accuracy that, in turn, enhances the trustworthiness of Luke – the author of both Luke and Acts.

### **A. Acts as Confirmation of Gospel Facts**

To verify facts in ancient sources, historians ask: do we have multiple independent sources for this fact? In support of the Gospel facts, Acts serves as an independent source. For example, Dr. Lydia McGrew has stated:

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<sup>1</sup> A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*, p. 189 (1963) (bold added).

<sup>2</sup> Sir William Ramsay *quoted in* Josh & Sean McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, p. 85 (2017) (bold added).

The book of Acts is a gold mine of evidence for the truth of Christianity that is not always fully appreciated.<sup>3</sup>

For core facts covered in our previous studies, Acts readily affirms facts about Jesus' existence, eyewitnesses, Resurrection, miracles, and deity.

### 1. Jesus' Existence

Overwhelming evidence proves Jesus' existence, as previously discussed in Study # 2. Acts repeatedly reinforces this fact. Indeed, its very first two verses specifically focus on Jesus:

The first account I composed, Theophilus, **about all that Jesus began to do and teach**, until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. [Acts 1:1-2 (bold added) (NASB)]

The record affirming Jesus' existence runs through the rest of Acts, from His early days (from Nazarene roots to baptism by John) to His ministry and miracles, and finally to the Passion week (crucifixion, burial, & Resurrection) and His ascension.<sup>4</sup>

### 2. Gospel Eyewitnesses

Eyewitnesses played a vital role throughout the Gospels, as Study # 4 previously covered. Acts corroborates the importance of witness testimony to Gospel events. For example, when the disciples had to select another member to replace Judas Iscariot, only someone with direct and firsthand knowledge (who saw, heard, or even touched Jesus) could serve as a witness (*martyra*):

Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have **accompanied us all the time** that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us – beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us – one of these must become a **witness** [*martyra*] with us of His resurrection. [Acts 2:21-22 (bold added) (NASB)]

Acts consistently reaffirms the core Gospel facts via “witnesses” (*martyres*) who directly observed the events.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Lydia McGrew, *Hidden in Plain View: Undesigned Coincidences in the Gospels and Acts*, p. 133 (2017).

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Acts 1:8 (Jesus' words commissioning apostles to witness “to the remotest part of the earth”); Acts 1:9-11 (His ascension); Acts 1:22 (from John's baptism to Resurrection); Acts 2:22-25 (“Jesus of Nazarene” attested by “miracles and wonders,” “nailed to a cross,” “raised” up again, and descended from David); Acts 3:13-15 (Jesus handed over to “Pilate,” but “God raised him from the dead”); Acts 4:10 (“Jesus of Nazarene” crucified and raised from dead); Acts 5:30 (Jesus hung on cross); Acts 9:3-16 (Jesus speaking to Saul); Acts 10:37-38 (“starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed” and “doing good and healing”); Acts 13:22-31 (from descending from David's line to being baptized by John, to judgment by Pilate, crucifixion, and Resurrection).

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., “witnesses” (*martyres*) in Acts 2:32, 3:15, 5:32, 6:13, 10:39, 10:41, 13:31, 22:15

### 3. Resurrection

For the Resurrection, the Gospels identify numerous eyewitnesses, as noted in Study # 5. Acts amplifies this extensive evidence reaffirming the many witnesses to the Resurrection. In fact, the third verse of Acts emphasizes not only that the apostles **saw** the risen Jesus, but they also **heard** him speaking – both classic hallmarks of eyewitnesses:

To these [apostles] **He also presented Himself** alive after His suffering by many convincing proofs, **appearing to them** over a period of forty days and **speaking** of the things concerning the kingdom of God. [Acts 1:3 (bold added) (NASB)]

Many of these references to “witnesses” (*martyres*) appear in short sermons by the apostles who had firsthand knowledge because they saw, heard, and even touched the risen Jesus.<sup>6</sup> As will be discussed in Section IV below, these short sermons (sermonettes) began early – soon after the crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus. Early eyewitness testimony serves as powerful historical evidence.

### 4. Gospel Miracles

Miracles did happen, as documented in the Gospels (*see* Study # 6). Acts offers even more proof documenting the Gospel miracles.

Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God **with miracles and wonders and signs** which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know – [Acts 2:22 (bold added) (NASB)]

*See also* Acts 10:38 (Jesus “went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him”). In other cases, Acts describes miracles in which the apostles healed in the name of Jesus.<sup>7</sup> Thus, Acts offers additional proof not only of Jesus performing miracles, but also of miracles in His name continuing even after the Resurrection.

### 5. Deity of Jesus

As the Gospels establish, Jesus bore many titles highlighting His deity (Study # 7). Continuing in Acts, the apostles repeatedly emphasize Jesus’ deity. As the angels stated:

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<sup>6</sup> Acts 2:32 (“witnesses” that “God raised up” Jesus); Acts 3:15 (“witnesses” that “you killed [Jesus] whom God raised from the dead”); Acts 4:10 (“Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified whom God raised from the dead”); 4:20 (“we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard”); Acts 5:30, 32 (“witnesses” that “God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross”); Acts 10:39-40 (“witnesses of all the things He did,” including “death by hanging him on a cross” and “God raised Him on the third day”); Acts 13:30-31 (“But God raised Him from the dead; and for many days He appeared to those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His witnesses to the people”).

<sup>7</sup> *See, e.g.*, Acts 3:6-8 (Peter healing lame “In the name of Jesus Christ”); Acts 4:30 (“You extend your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus”); Acts 5:12 (“At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people”).

Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you **into heaven**, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven. [Acts 1:11 (bold added) (NASB)].

In Acts, the apostles refer to Jesus as “Lord” or “Lord Jesus” (Acts 1:6, 21, 24; 9:5, 13, 17), “Christ” (Acts 2:31; 2:38; 3:6; 3:18-20; 4:10; 8:12), “the right hand of God” (Acts 2:33; 5:31; 7:55-56), “Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36), “Prince of life” (Acts 3:15), “the Righteous One” (Acts 7:52), “Son of Man” (Acts 7:56), and “Son of God” (Acts 9:20;13:33).

In summary, Acts verifies central Gospel truths of Christianity, including Jesus’ life, ministry, miracles, death, Resurrection, and deity. In tandem, Acts and the Gospels – plus the Epistles, pre-Gospel sources, and more – make the New Testament the best documented, most reliable record in ancient history.

### **B. Acts as a Reliability Benchmark for Luke**

Luke wrote both the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, as Acts 1:1 notes (both written to “Theophilus,” with the Gospel being the “first account”).<sup>8</sup> As Martin Hengel said, “Acts cannot be separated from the Third Gospel: both books must be understood as a historical and theological unity.”<sup>9</sup>

As discussed in Section III below, Acts rests upon a well-built historical foundation with historians, archaeologists, and other experts touting its wealth of facts corroborated by independent sources. Given that the same author wrote both the Third Gospel and Acts, the historical reliability of Acts bolsters the credibility and reliability of Luke:

If one can argue convincingly that Acts is reliable and was written by someone close to the events (e.g., a companion of the Apostle Paul), who would have had a chance to interview those claiming to be eyewitnesses of the resurrected Jesus, there is no longer any reason to grant critical doubts on these points regarding the Gospel of Luke. A **successful defense of Acts** therefore allows us to reason backwards to the **reliability of Luke**.<sup>10</sup>

With the tandem reliability of Luke/Acts, we can trust that Luke relied upon “**eyewitnesses**” and “**investigated everything carefully** from the beginning.” Luke 1:2-3 (bold added). In turn, Luke applied the same careful investigative process to writing Acts.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., Colin Hemer, *The Book of Acts*, pp. 30-33 (“near consensus”), 308 (1990); Lydia McGrew, *Hidden in Plain View*, p. 135 (2017); Paul Barnett, *The Birth of Christianity*, p. 189 (2005).

<sup>9</sup> Martin Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity*, p. 37 (1979).

<sup>10</sup> Lydia McGrew, *Hidden in Plain View*, p. 135 (2017) (bold added).

<sup>11</sup> Colin Hemer, *The Book of Acts*, p. 85 (“chronicle what really happened” & “matter-of-fact reality which the reader can know to be true”); p. 414 (“most likely that participation and the testimony and interview of eyewitnesses were employed whenever possible”) (1990); Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, p. 385 (1990) (“fair inference that the principles which apply to the gospel apply equally to Acts”).

### III. What Independent Evidence Verifies the Reliability of Acts?

Acts has a strong track record of getting the facts right. Both the experts and the independent sources converge to show Acts' historical reliability and trustworthiness.

#### A. What the Top Scholars Say

Over many decades, a broad spectrum of historians, archaeologists, and New Testament scholars have acknowledged the verified historical and factual value of Acts.

- Roman historian A. N. Sherwin-White. “For Acts the **confirmation of historicity is overwhelming**. . . . [A]ny attempt to reject its basic historicity even in matters of detail must now appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted.”<sup>12</sup>
- Classical & New Testament scholar Colin Hemer. “Here [in Acts] we discovered a **wealth of material** suggesting an author or sources familiar with the particular locations and at the times in question. . . . By and large, these perspectives all converged to support the **general reliability** of the narrative, through the **details so intricately yet often unintentionally woven into that narrative**.”<sup>13</sup>
- New Testament Resurrection scholar Gary Habermas. “Acts is just **full of these areas of confirmation**. It may even be **unsurpassed** among New Testament sources in terms of external confirmation.”<sup>14</sup>

British archaeologist Sir William Ramsey “started out as a sceptic regarding the historical value of Acts,” believing that it had been written in the mid-second century AD.<sup>15</sup> After closely examining Acts, Sir Ramsey reversed his view of its reliability:

- “I found myself brought into contact with the Book of Acts as an authority for the topography, antiquities and society of Asia Minor. It was gradually borne upon me that in various details the **narrative showed marvelous truth**.”<sup>16</sup>
- “Luke is a **historian of the first rank**; . . . this author should be placed along side the very greatest of historians.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*, p. 189 (1963) (bold added).

<sup>13</sup> Colin Hemer, *The Book of Acts*, pp. 412 (1990) (bold added).

<sup>14</sup> Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p. 890 (2024) (bold added).

<sup>15</sup> Howard Marshall “Forward” to Colin Hemer, *The Book of Acts*, p. vii (1990); see also Josh & Sean McDowell, *Evidence for the Resurrection*, p. 148 (2009) (mid-second century AD).

<sup>16</sup> Sir William Ramsay quoted in Josh & Sean McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, p. 85 (2017) (bold added).

<sup>17</sup> Sir William Ramsey, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, p. 222 (1920) quoted in Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p. 891 (2024) (bold added).

## B. What the Independent External Sources Show

Multiple examinations of Acts have confirmed as many as 100 facts corroborated by independent external sources.<sup>18</sup>

- Craig Keener (author of the 4640-page analysis of *Acts*). “Incredibly, Craig Keener even estimates that perhaps as many as **100 different items** throughout Acts have been verified.”<sup>19</sup>
- Colin Hemer (author of landmark *The Book of Acts*). “With painstaking detail, Hemer identifies **84 facts in the last 16 chapters** of Acts that have been confirmed by historical and archaeological research.”<sup>20</sup>
- Norman Geisler (New Testament scholar). “In all, Luke names thirty-two countries, fifty-four cities and nine islands **without an error**.”<sup>21</sup>

These details range from political positions and titles (e.g., “Cyprus as a proconsular”), systems of communication (Troas’ role), geography (“Perga, a river-port”), political subdivisions (Iconium “not in Lycaonia”), local languages (“Lycaonia language”), and more.<sup>22</sup> In short, Acts enjoys a level of independent corroboration by external sources that far outpaces non-Christian ancient histories.<sup>23</sup>

## IV. How Does Acts Compare with the Historical Criteria for Ancient Sources?

As discussed in prior studies, historians measure ancient history against specific benchmarks such as: (1) how early is the data; (2) do eyewitnesses support the history; and (3) do multiple independent sources agree?<sup>24</sup> On these criteria, Acts excels with early eyewitnesses and other sources in agreement.

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<sup>18</sup> See e.g., Joseph Fitzmyer, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 126 (1998) cited in Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p. 890 (2024) (“literally scores” of historical details corroborated in Acts); Lydia McGrew, *Hidden in Plain View*, p. 133 (2017) (“Acts displays even more incidental connections to external history than the Gospels do”).

<sup>19</sup> Personal correspondence from Craig Keener (Feb. 3, 2017) cited in Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, pp. 890-91 (2024) (bold added).

<sup>20</sup> Colin Hemer, *The Book of Acts*, Chapters 5-6 (1990) cited in Norman Geisler & Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist*, p. 256 (2004) (bold added); *id.*, pp. 256-58 (list of 84 facts by verse in Acts); see also Lydia McGrew, *Hidden in Plain View*, p. 246-7, n. 2 (2017) (“wealth of information” and details).

<sup>21</sup> Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, p. 47 (2006) cited in Josh & Sean McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, p. 87 (2017) (bold added).

<sup>22</sup> Colin Hemer, *The Book of Acts*, pp. 108-158 (1990).

<sup>23</sup> Martin Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity*, p. 41 (1979) (“Measured by the ‘riches’ of early Christian sources, our knowledge of other phenomena from the history of ancient culture and religion is **rather scanty**”) (bold added) (listing many “scanty” non-Christian ancient histories).

<sup>24</sup> See e.g., Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, pp. 44-52 (2024); John Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, Vol. 2, pp. 2:5, 537, 619 (1994); *id.*, Vol. 1, Chap. 6; Bart Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist*, pp. 40-42 (2012).

## A. Early Sources of Data

Acts rests upon early data. Not only did Luke write Acts within the lifetime of eyewitnesses, but many of its sermonettes began shortly after the Resurrection.

### 1. Early Dating of Acts (AD 62)

Many scholars have dated Acts at or before AD 62.<sup>25</sup> The most comprehensive and detailed analysis comes from Colin Hemer who dated Acts in AD 62 after evaluating 15 individual factors, many prior studies, and the “immediacy” factor (Acts ending with the extraordinary detail of an eyewitness).<sup>26</sup> In other words, Acts appeared within about 32 years of the crucifixion and Resurrection – a virtual blink-of-the-eye in the ancient world.

In stark contrast, many other ancient records remained unwritten for 140 to 500 to 4,200 years after the subject had died, such as Buddha, Krishna, Muhammad, Alexander the Great, and Julius Caesar. *See Study # 3 (How Does the New Testament Stack Up Against Other Ancient Records)*.<sup>27</sup> Based on the earliness test, these ancient records lose the race to Acts by 400% or more. Thus, Acts easily surmounts the earliness hurdle.

### 2. Dating within Lifetime of Eyewitnesses

More importantly, Luke wrote Acts (AD 62) within the lifetime of the eyewitnesses.<sup>28</sup> For example, key eyewitnesses like Peter and Paul remained alive until Nero’s reign (AD 64-67), while John likely lived until around the end of the first century.<sup>29</sup> Thus, Acts arrived in time to be fully vetted by the most knowledgeable and influential eyewitnesses.

### 3. Sermonettes Shortly After Resurrection

Acts contains a series of short sermons preached by the apostles. *See Acts 1:21-22; 2:22-36; 3:13-16; 5:29-32; 10:39-43; 13:28-31; 17:3; and 17:30-31.* Similar to the early oral tradition

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<sup>25</sup> Colin Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, p. 367-8 (1990) (citing over 20 scholars with dates for Acts from the early to mid-60s); Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the New Testament*, pp. 14-17 (2016) (AD 62).

<sup>26</sup> Colin Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, p. 376-408 (1990).

<sup>27</sup> *See, e.g.*, Edward Conze, editor & translator, *Buddhist Scriptures*, pp. 5-6 (1959) ([https://archive.org/details/buddhistscripturesedwardconze\\_202003\\_470\\_X/page/n3/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/buddhistscripturesedwardconze_202003_470_X/page/n3/mode/2up)) (Buddha: 500-year gap); Gary Habermas, *The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ among the Major World Religions*, p. 21 (2016) (Krishna: 4,200-year gap); Nabeel Qureshi, *No God But One*, p. 260 (2016) (Muhammad: 140-year gap); Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the New Testament*, p. 18 (2016) (Alexander the Great: 250-400-year gap); Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p. 118 (2024) (Julius Cesezar: 150-year gap).

<sup>28</sup> *See, e.g.*, Colin Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, p. 409-10 (1990) (AD 62 “places Acts unequivocally in the lifetime of many eyewitnesses and surviving contemporaries”); Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the New Testament*, p. 17 (2016) (explaining that dates within “thirty, forty, or fifty years after Jesus’s death” were “well within the lifetimes of some who were eyewitnesses of Jesus’s ministry”).

<sup>29</sup> Sean McDowell, *The Fate of the Apostles*, p. 92 (Peter), p. 114 (Paul) (2008); Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the New Testament*, p. 160 (2016) (John lived “until the time of Trajan (AD 98)”).

(creed) previously discussed at 1 Corinthians 15:3-7, many scholars date these short sermons back to the time near the Resurrection – and well before the written Gospels.<sup>30</sup>

- “Lastly, Acts contains many valuable early sermon summaries often dated in the **early 30s.**”<sup>31</sup>
- “[T]he speeches in Acts . . . contain material that predate Paul’s letters” and “an enormous number of oral traditions about [Jesus] can be dated back to Aramaic sources of Palestine, almost certainly from the **30s of the Common Era.**”<sup>32</sup>
- “John Drane actually thinks that several sermon summaries in Acts are the earliest material of all, since the text ‘almost certainly goes back to the time **immediately after the resurrection event.**’”<sup>33</sup>

Dating these Acts sermonettes back within a few years of the Resurrection means that nearly all of the eyewitnesses still lived to verify the statements. In the world of ancient history, sources within 15 years of the event “would represent a brevity without equal.”<sup>34</sup> For this additional reason, Acts far exceeds the historical standard for early sources.

## **B. Eyewitness Testimony**

As Dr. Gary Habermas states, the combination of early sources and eyewitness testimony produces a “*huge mountain to climb for any scholars who wish to dismiss the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus.*”<sup>35</sup> Acts meets both the early and eyewitness criteria on multiple levels, including: (1) Luke’s own eyewitness to events (the “we” passages); (2) Luke’s interviews of eyewitnesses; and (3) the sermonettes based on apostolic witnesses.

Luke’s “We” Passages. In later passages in Acts, Luke refers to “we,” thus indicating that he travelled with Paul. See Acts 16:10-16; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16. During the second half of Acts, Luke became an eyewitness, thus giving him firsthand knowledge of the events.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> The Acts sermon summaries include Acts 1:21-22; 2:22-36; 3:13-16; 4:8-10; 5:29-32; 10:39-43; 13:28-31; 17:3; 17:30-31. Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, pp. 452 n. 52; see C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development*, pp. 27-28 (1962) (Acts 10:35-41 “represents the form of *kerygma* used by the primitive Church in its earliest approaches to a wider public”); Colin Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, p. 421-22 (1990) (Acts speeches contain an “evident primitive quality of much of the material”).

<sup>31</sup> Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p. 460 (2024) (bold added).

<sup>32</sup> Bart Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist?* pp. 141, 97 (2012) (bold added).

<sup>33</sup> John Drane, *Introducing the New Testament*, p. 99 (1986) cited in Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p. 450 (2024) (bold added).

<sup>34</sup> Paul Barnett, *The Birth of Christianity: The First Twenty Years*, p. 210 (2005).

<sup>35</sup> Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p. 376 (2024) (italics in original).

<sup>36</sup> Joseph Fitzmyer, *Luke the Theologian*, p. 22 (1989) (Luke’s observations “drawn from a diary-like record”) quoted in Paul Barnett, *The Birth of Christianity: The First Twenty Years*, p. 191 (2005); Martin Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity*, p. 66 (1979) (“‘We’ therefore appears in the travel accounts because Luke simply wanted to indicate that he was there”).

Luke's Eyewitness Interviews. Based upon his detailed textual analysis of Luke and Acts, historian Colin Hemer found support for the view that Luke interviewed witnesses.<sup>37</sup> In another analysis, theologian E. G. Selwyn “made an exhaustive survey of points of possible contact between 1 Peter and the speeches of Peter in Acts,” describing them as “utterances from the same mind” and finding a “historical” connection between the two.<sup>38</sup> Thus, the actual text indicates that Luke conducted interviews capturing firsthand testimony from key eyewitnesses.

Acts Sermonettes. The Acts sermonettes are not only early (as discussed above), but also expressly refer to “witnesses” (*martyres*) for historical events. These sermonettes include:

- Acts 1:22. “beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us – one of these must become a **witness** [*martyra*] with us of His resurrection.” [bold added (NASB)]
- Acts 2:32. “This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all **witnesses** [*martyres*].” [bold added (NASB)]
- Acts 3:15. “but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, **a fact** to which we are **witnesses** [*martyres*].” [bold added (NASB)]
- Acts 5:32. “And we are **witnesses** [*martyres*] of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.” [bold added (NASB)]
- Acts 10:39. “We are **witnesses** [*martyres*] of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross.” [bold added (NASB)]
- Acts 13:31. “and for many days He appeared to those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His **witnesses** [*martyres*] to the people.” [bold added (NASB)]

These sermonettes expressly identify **witnesses** to facts like Jesus’ ministry (“beginning with the baptism of John”), Resurrection (“raised up again”), crucifixion (“put to death”), various events (“of these things” and “of all the things He did”), and post-Resurrection (“He appeared to those”). These “witnesses” are eyewitnesses with direct firsthand experience to these events.<sup>39</sup>

In summary, eyewitness evidence runs through Acts from beginning to end, thus readily meeting the historical criterion for reliability.

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<sup>37</sup> Colin Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, pp. 338-48 (textual analysis), pp. 351, 354-55 (indications of eyewitness interviews) (1990).

<sup>38</sup> Paul Barnett, *The Birth of Christianity: The First Twenty Years*, p. 210 (2005) citing E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St Peter*, p. 36 (1946).

<sup>39</sup> See John Mauck, *Paul on Trial: The Book of Acts as a Defense of Christianity*, p. 35 (Acts 2:32: “The resurrection is a fact verifiable by many witnesses”); *id.*, p. 52 (witnesses “in the judicial sense”) (2001); Marie-Eloise Rosenblatt, *Paul the Accused*, p. 4 (1995) (“Intensive forms of *witness* appear in several places and reinforce the juridical context of witness”).

### C. Multiple Independent Sources

Based on external sources alone, Acts represents one of the most thoroughly and independently corroborated records in ancient history. *See* Section III.A & B above.

In addition, Acts has ample corroboration by other sources for the topics previously discussed in these studies.

- Jesus' Ministry & Miracles. Gospels, Epistles, Acts, non-Christian sources, and more all confirm Jesus' life, ministry, and miracles. *See* Studies ## 2 & 6.
- Jesus' Crucifixion, Resurrection, & Deity. Gospels, Epistles, early Christian fathers, creeds (*e.g.*, 1 Corinthians 15:3-7), Acts, early sermonettes (*e.g.*, Acts 2:32), non-Christian sources, and more provide ample verification for Jesus' crucifixion, Resurrection, and deity. *See* Studies ## 3, 4, 5, and 7.

In short, no ancient record comes close to the vast number of independent sources that corroborate and verify the New Testament. Thus, the New Testament (including Acts) fully surpasses this historical criterion for multiple attestation.

### V. Conclusion

Written by one of the “very greatest of historians,” Acts meets the most rigorous standards for ancient history with its extraordinarily early sources, extensive reliance on eyewitness testimony, and virtually unmatched level of independent corroboration by as much as 100 external sources. On this record, Roman historian A. N. Sherwin-White is right when he says, “For Acts the **confirmation of historicity is overwhelming.**” For these reasons, Acts serves as a powerful tool for affirming the historical facts and truths of the New Testament.

David Z. Bodenheimer  
Trial Attorney (1982-2022)