

Chronology of Acts and Paul¹

Date	Event	Scripture reference
c. 20	Paul sent to Jerusalem for education under Gamaliel II	Acts 22:3
30 or 33	Crucifixion of Jesus	
31 or 32	Paul's conversion	Acts 9:1-19
34 or 35	Paul's return to Jerusalem and then home to Tarsus	Acts 9:26-30; Gal 1:18-20
40	Barnabas drafts Paul for ministry in Antioch	Acts 11:25-26
c.45	Paul and Barnabas make famine visit	Acts 11:27-30; Gal 2:1
46	First missionary journey	Acts 13-14
	Galatians	
49	Apostolic Council	Acts 15
50	Second missionary journey	Acts 15:41-18:22
50-52	Paul 18 months in Corinth; accused before Gallio. 1-2 Thess.	Acts 18:11-14,17
52-55	Third missionary journey, including 3 years in Ephesus. 1 Cor.	Acts 18:18-21:17; 19:1-20:1
55-56	Paul in Macedonia, Illyricum, Greece. 2 Cor.	Acts 20:1-2; Rom 15:19
57	Paul spends 3 months in Corinth. Romans.	Acts 20:3
57-59	Paul arrested in Jerusalem; imprisoned in Caesarea Maritima; appeals to Caesar before Festus. Prison Epistles.	Acts 21:27-24:27; 25:11
59	Voyage toward Rome; shipwreck on Malta	Acts 27-28
60	Arrival at Rome	Acts 28:14
62 or 63	Pastoral Epistles?	
63 or 64	Paul executed under Nero	

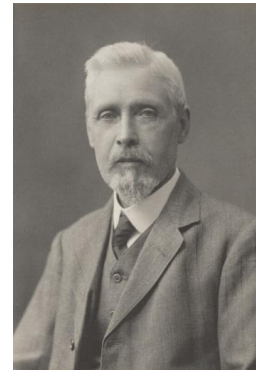
NT Survey: Class Schedule

8	29-Oct-23	Acts
9	5-Nov-23	Introduction to Paul
10	12-Nov-23	Romans
11	19-Nov-23	1 Corinthians
12	26-Nov-23	2 Corinthians

¹ Class notes from Robert W. Yarbrough, "Acts and Paul."

New Testament Survey

Class 7: Acts as History



Sir William Ramsay (1851-1939), was a professor at Oxford and Aberdeen. His education grounded him firmly in the belief that the book of Acts was a second-century fabrication. However, after extensive archaeological work in the locations described in Acts he came to a very different conclusion: the book of Acts is the work of a first rate historian who must have been a traveling companion of Paul.

"I may fairly claim to have entered on this investigation [of the historical trustworthiness of Acts] without any prejudice in favour of the conclusion which I shall now attempt to justify to the reader. On the contrary, I began with a mind unfavourable to it, for the ingenuity and apparent completeness of the Tübingen theory had at one time quite convinced me. It did not lie then in my line of life to investigate the subject minutely; but more recently I found myself often brought in contact with the book of Acts as an authority for the topography, antiquities, and society of Asia Minor. It was gradually borne in upon me that in various details the narrative showed marvellous truth. In fact, beginning with the fixed idea that the work was essentially a second-century composition, and never relying on its evidence as trustworthy for first-century conditions, I gradually came to find it a useful ally in some obscure and difficult investigations."²

² William M. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1897), pp. 7-8.

Ramsay solved the Galatian question

If Paul wrote to the Galatian churches after his second journey, why didn't he mention the Jerusalem council (Acts 15)?

Notes on Luke's accuracy:

- Precisely named officials in the correct cities
*"The officials with whom Paul and his companions were brought in contact are those who would be there. Every person is found just where he ought to be: proconsuls in senatorial provinces, asiarchs in Ephesus, strategoi in Philippi, politarchs in Thessalonica [Acts 17:6,8], magicians and soothsayers everywhere."*³
- Precisely named cities in their 1st century provinces
In Acts 14:6 Luke writes that Paul left Phrygia and entered Lycaonia when he departed Iconium. While this was true an accurate representation of the borders in the 4th c. BC, it was not true in 1st c. BC. However, several monuments discovered in Iconium in 1910 confirmed that it was a city in Phrygia in the 1st c. AD.

Luke wrote compressed history

He was focused on thematic history, not merely chronological. Sometimes he summarizes years in a single sentence (e.g., Acts 6:7), while at other times a single incident takes a whole chapter (e.g., Stephen's speech in Acts 7).

He wrote objectively even if not dispassionately

Paul is his hero, but he does not fall into partisanship or one-sided argumentation (e.g., Acts 15:36-41).

Luke wrote with a distinct plan and goal

- He wanted to help clarify the letters of Paul by putting them into a historical framework. Acts is the best commentary on the letters of Paul (see timeline on final page).
- He wanted to describe the development of the mission to take the gospel to the Gentiles.
- He wanted to defend Christians against accusations that they were rebellious trouble-makers (e.g., Acts 17:6; 22:25; 23:29).
- He carried forward specific threads of the story, focusing on critical steps in the development. Sometimes this requires chronological jumps forward to complete a story, or backward to pick up a new theme (e.g., Acts 11:19).

Every historian shapes their narrative by which events they choose to include or omit, but they must also be careful not to allow their preferences to allow them to misrepresent facts. The narrative of Acts includes the most minute details in exactly the correct places, leading to the conclusion that it is a carefully compiled and accurate history.

³ Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament* (1915), pp.96-97.