

Acts 15 Answers to Questions (Tools for Bible Study)

Greek – How Do We Know (for sure) What a Text Says? (AND, The Original Language Makes a Difference)

Acts 15:39 ἐγένετο δὲ παροξυσμὸς ὥστε ἀποχωρισθῆναι αὐτοὺς ἀπ’ ἀλλήλων, τὸν τε Βαρναβᾶν παραλαβόντα τὸν Μάρκον ἐκπλεῦσαι εἰς Κύπρον,
egeneto de paroXusmos hoste apoxoristhenai them ap’ allelon, ton te Barnaban paralabonta ton Markon ekpleusai eis Kupron

It came to pass a CONTENTION so as to cause to separate them from one another, the Barnabas having taken along Mark to sail to Cyprus,

Acts 15:40 Παῦλος δὲ ἐπιλεξάμενος Σιλᾶν ἐξῆλθεν παραδοθεὶς τῇ χάριτι τοῦ κυρίου ὑπὸ τῶν ἀδελφῶν.

Paulos de epileXamenos Silan eXelthen paradotheis tei xariti tou kuriou hupo ton adelphon.

And PAUL, having chosen Silas, went out, having been handed over to the grace of the Lord by the brethren.

The Intent of the Word

- To give us the information we need
- Scripture is there for a purpose

The Purpose of Acts

- Nowhere does Acts state that this is the explicit purpose or focus of Acts (or the latter portion of Acts)
- Acts is not a two-part story (Peter / Paul). It can be generalized as such, but it is much more complex and broad than two men.
- It is improper to assume that Luke's sole purpose was Paul, but it seems that it more reflects the commanded expansion of the Gospel as summarized in Acts 1:8: Jerusalem (1:1-8:4), Judea & Samaria (8:5 – 12:25), and the uttermost parts (13:1-28:31).
- The Book of Acts is the connecting history to and background for the Epistles.

The Place of the Church

- *Is having the church approve such efforts a poor measuring stick?*
- The church is directly involved in evaluating and selecting leaders, and sending some out. There is no indication that people operated independently from church recognition and approval.
- If the church's input is seen as faulty, how much more is one individual's single view more likely to be faulty?
 - It is not an issue of congregational rule – the text in no way reflects how the church operated. That information has to come from the previous text and other passages which define church government.

Barnabas Did Not Write, Because Only Apostles Wrote

- Peter wrote because he was an Apostle
- What about Luke?

The Presence of Luke and the Texts that He Wrote

- Luke only wrote about people he was with. “Luke only followed Paul” as the reason Barnabas is no longer mentioned. “Luke is telling Paul’s story.”
- Luke built much if not all the gospel of Luke by witnesses (Luke 1:1-4), not personal observation. It is the most detailed and thorough gospel of the four.
- Luke appears to have built most of the book of Acts in the same manner

Author—Chapter 1, verse 1, refers Theophilus to “The former account,” that is, the Gospel of Luke. (See “Author” in Luke for the internal and external support for Lucan authorship of Luke.) Luke’s source for the “we” sections in this book (16:10–17; 20:5–21:18; 27:1–28:16) was his own memory if not some kind of diary. For the remainder of this book, Luke no doubt followed the same careful investigative procedures that he used in writing his gospel (Luke 1:1–4). As a close traveling companion of Paul, Luke had access to the principal eyewitness for chapters 13–28. It is also likely that he had opportunities to interview such key witnesses in Jerusalem as Peter and John for the information in chapters 1–12. Acts indicates that Luke may have used written documents as well (see 15:23–29; 23:26–30). (Wilkinson, Walk Thru the Bible)

- When did Luke join with Paul? – “We/Us” passages are only found in three segments: Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28-16. Luke was not a permanent member of Paul’s travels.
 - He does not appear to have accompanied Saul/Paul and Barnabas on the first journey. He would have had to research it as he had done with all of his other writing up to this point.
- God’s Word does not require man’s presence (Gen 1:1)
- Luke detailed the life of Barnabas earlier in Acts without being with Barnabas.
- Luke did not follow Peter (Acts 1-8:4) or Philip (Acts 8:4-40), but recorded the actions of both.
- If Luke was present:
 - He did not record any interaction with Barnabas and Mark with the church, even though he did so with Paul (and Silas).
 - He documented the interaction and commendation of Paul and Silas by the church.
- If Luke was not present:
 - His account is strangely incomplete.
 - He recorded an event regarding Paul and ignored an event regarding Barnabas that happened just previously.

Travel as a Team

- Paul and Barnabas seemed to travel just as a pair during the first trip (after Mark abandoned them).
- Paul traveled by himself at times.
- Paul had additional help at times (but often sent them as couriers or helpers to other places).