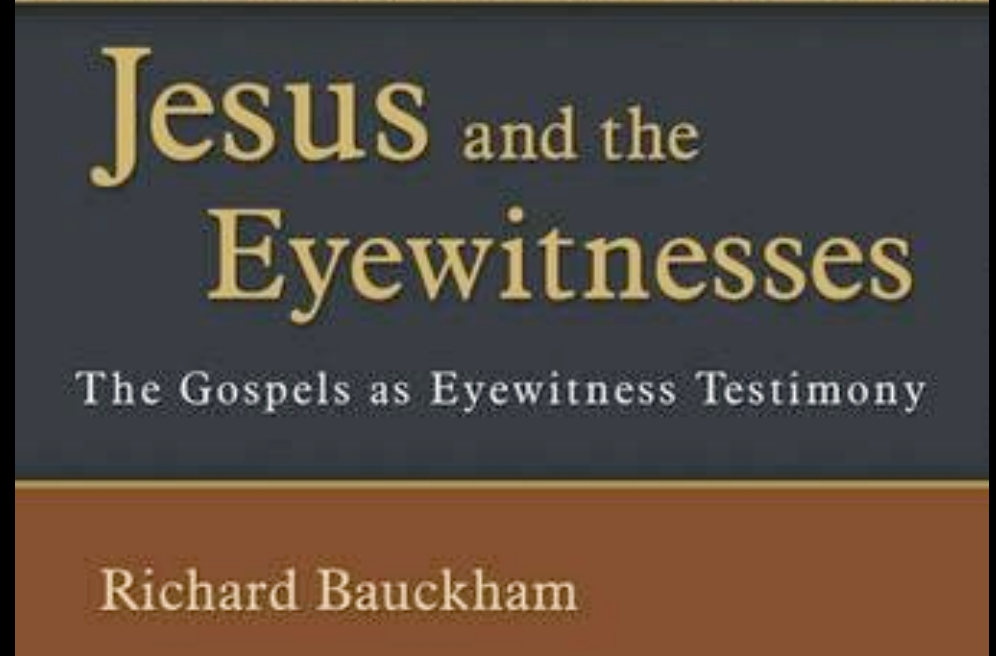


THE TYNDALE NEW TESTAMENT LECTURE 2025

# Acts and the Eyewitnesses

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# Acts and the Eyewitnesses?

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- The place of eyewitness testimony in Acts
- The role of eyewitness testimony concerning the Jesus stories according to Acts
- The role of eyewitness testimony concerning the stories in Acts

# Eyewitness testimony in Acts

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- The importance of testimony
  - 1:8 ‘my (μου) witnesses’
  - widespread use of μάρτυς, μαρτυρία and μαρτύριον, μαρτυρέω and μαρτύρομαι  
29x in Acts
- Luke providing written apostolic testimony

# Eyewitness testimony in Acts

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- The importance of testimony
  - ‘witness’ as technical term
    - the twelve
    - Stephen 22:20
    - Paul 13:30; 22:15; 26:16
    - ‘they’ Luke 24:36, 44
      - ‘the eleven and those with them’ 24:33
    - ‘those who had come together’ Acts 1:6

# Eyewitness testimony in Acts

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- Three dimensions of witness
  - Jesus' ministry, death, resurrection and exaltation 1:21-22; 2:22-24; 10:36-42
  - Jesus' holy and righteous character which produced healings and other powerful deeds 3:14; 10:38
  - Jesus' present status as Lord, which calls people to repent and trust in him 2:38; 3:22-23; 10:43; Luke 24:46-47

# Eyewitness testimony in Acts

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- The place of the eleven/twelve
  - replacing Judas 1:12-26
    - divine δεῖ v 21
    - person specification vv 21-22
    - ‘a witness of his resurrection’ v 22
    - restoration of Israel cf. Luke 22:28-30

# Eyewitness testimony in Acts

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- The place of the eleven/twelve
  - replacing Judas 1:12-26
  - ‘the apostles’ teaching’ 2:42
  - the widows 6:1-7
    - τῇ διακονίᾳ τοῦ λόγου ν 4
    - διακονεῖν τραπέζαις ν 2



# Eyewitness testimony in Acts

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- The place of the eleven/twelve
  - Peter speaking to Cornelius' household
    - Peter is among the witnesses vv 39, 41
    - ἀρξάμενος ἀπὸ τῆς Γαλιλαίας μετὰ τὸ βάπτισμα ὃ ἐκήρυξεν Ἰωάννης v 37
    - ἀρξάμενος ἀπὸ τοῦ βαπτίσματος Ἰωάννου 1:22

# Eyewitness testimony in Acts

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- Named individuals, not anonymous communities
- Luke's method Luke 1:1-4

Inasmuch as many have undertaken the task of  
compiling an account of the matters which have come  
to fruition in our midst,

just as the tradition was handed down  
to us by the original eyewitnesses  
and servants of the word,

I too decided, having followed everything  
carefully and thoroughly,

to write it all up for you in an orderly  
fashion, most excellent Theophilus,

so that you may have assured knowledge about  
the things in which you have been instructed.

Inasmuch as many have undertaken the task of  
compiling an account of the matters which have come  
to fruition in our midst,

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so that you may have assured knowledge about  
the things in which you have been instructed.

Inasmuch as many have undertaken the task of  
compiling an account of the matters which have come  
to fruition in our midst,

just as the tradition was handed down  
to us by the ἀπ' ἀρχῆς αὐτόπται  
and servants of the word,

I too decided, having followed everything  
carefully and thoroughly,

to write it all up for you in an orderly  
fashion, most excellent Theophilus,

so that you may have assured knowledge about  
the things in which you have been instructed.

Inasmuch as many have undertaken the task of compiling an account of the matters which have come to fruition in our midst,

just as the tradition was handed down  
to us by the ἀπ' ἀρχῆς αὐτόπται  
and servants of the word,

I too decided, παρηκολουθηκότι everything carefully and ἄνωθεν,

to write it all up for you in an orderly fashion, most excellent Theophilus,

so that you may have assured knowledge about the things in which you have been instructed.

Inasmuch as many have undertaken the task of  
compiling an account of the matters which have come  
to fruition in our midst,

just as the tradition was handed down  
to us by the ἀπ' ἀρχῆς αὐτόπται  
and servants of the word,

ἔδοξεν καί μοι, παρηκολουθηκότι everything  
carefully and ἄνωθεν,

γράφαι for you in an orderly fashion, most  
excellent Theophilus,

so that you may have assured knowledge about  
the things in which you have been instructed.



# Eyewitness testimony in Acts

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- Named individuals, not anonymous communities
- Luke's method Luke 1:1-4
- Implications for the Gospels
  - named eyewitnesses

# Using Bauckham's ideas in Acts

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- Named individuals as sources of stories
  - Philip the evangelist 8:4-40
    - 'we' visit Philip and his daughters 21:8-9
    - κατὰ τοὺς αὐτοὺς...γενόμενος 'being with them' (sc. Philip's daughters) gained information ὑπὸ τῶν τοῦ Φιλίππου θυγατέρων 'from the daughters of Philip' Eusebius, *H.E.* 3.39.9
    - living in Hierapolis *H.E.* 3.31.3-5; 3.39.8-9

# Using Bauckham's ideas in Acts

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- Named individuals as sources of stories
  - Philip the evangelist 8:4-40
  - Rhoda the παιδίσκη 12:13
    - doorkeeper v 13
    - recognises Peter's voice v 14
    - a believer vv 13, 14
    - only one who knows the whole story
    - hears Peter's account vv 17a, 6-1

# Using Bauckham's ideas in Acts

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- Named individuals as sources of stories
  - Philip the evangelist 8:4-40
  - Rhoda the παιδίσκη 12:13
  - Jason of Thessalonica
    - 17:5 mob attacks his house
    - 17:7 hosted Paul and Silas
    - Ἰάσων γυνὴ Ἰησοῦς
    - convert during synagogue ministry? vv 1-4
    - Paul and Silas not at Jason's house v 6

# Using Bauckham's ideas in Acts

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- Named individuals as sources of stories
  - 'we' 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1–28:16
  - 6-7 months from 10-12 years in Acts 1628
  - begin and end abruptly 16:17; 21:18; 28:16
  - detailed stories: e.g. Philippi
  - hapax legomena
    - 21 in 'we' and Acts, but not elsewhere in NT
    - 17 only in 'we' and Luke's Gospel
    - 28 predominantly in 'we' and rarely in rest of NT

# Using Bauckham's ideas in Acts

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- Named individuals as sources of stories
  - 'we' 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1–28:16
  - most naturally seen as claim to participation—Barrett, Ehrman
  - Haenchen: using a source to signal eyewitness testimony
  - cf. first-person narrative in Ezra-Nehemiah

The 'we' narrative of the Acts of the Apostles contains nothing that ancient readers would not have considered completely realistic. They could only see it as an account of the author's real experiences. If the author had not taken part in the journeys described in the 'we' form, his accounts of them would have been lies—even according to ancient understanding.

C.-J. Thornton, *Der Zeuge des Zeugen: Lukas als Historiker der Paulusreisen*, 141 [my translation]

# Using Bauckham's ideas in Acts

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- Evidence from the letters
  - *πᾶσιν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν ἐν τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ καὶ ἐν τῇ Ἀχαΐᾳ...ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν ἡ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἐξελέλυθεν* | Thess 1:7-8
  - *ἀφ' ὑμῶν* 1:8
  - 1:9-10
  - *μιμηταί* of the Judaeans believers 2:14-15
  - 2 Thess 1:4



# Using Bauckham's ideas in Acts

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- Evidence from the letters
  - the Corinthians as a letter of recommendation 2 Cor 3:1-3
  - 'to the assembly of God which is in Corinth together with all the holy ones who are in the whole of Achaia' 1:1
  - Paul's encouragement at Titus' news 7:4-13
  - the example of the Macedonian assemblies 2 Cor 8:1-6

# Using Bauckham's ideas in Acts

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- Evidence from the letters

- ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν καταγγέλλεται ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ Rom 1:8 cf. Rom 16

- Ἐπαφρᾶ τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ συνδούλου ἡμῶν, ὅς...ὁ καὶ δηλώσας ἡμῖν τὴν ὑμῶν ἀγάπην ἐν πνεύματι Col 1:7-8

- Τὰ κατ' ἐμὲ πάντα γνωρίσει ὑμῖν Τύχικος ὁ ἀγαπητὸς ἀδελφὸς καὶ πιστὸς διάκονος καὶ σύνδουλος ἐν κυρίῳ, ὃν ἔπεμψα πρὸς ὑμᾶς εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο, ἵνα γνῶτε τὰ περὶ ἡμῶν καὶ παρακαλέσῃ τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν...σὺν Ὁνησίμῳ...πάντα ὑμῖν γνωρίσουσιν τὰ ὧδε. Col 4:7-9

In the Pauline churches, there was preaching about the missionary experiences of the apostles and about the establishment of churches; and the spiritual triumphs of the various churches were used for paracletic and parenetic purposes.

W.Ward Gasque, 'Did Luke Have Access to Traditions about the Apostles and the Early Church?', 48



*"Quit worrying about corroborating your sources—it's not  
as if anyone's going to take all this literally."*

# Using Bauckham's ideas in Acts

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- Can we trust eyewitness testimony?
  - Rainer Riesner, drawing on Ruth Finnegan
    - divinely inspired teacher
    - oral text in fixed form, e.g. poetry
    - group trained to pass it on

# Using Bauckham's ideas in Acts

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- Can we trust eyewitness testimony?
  - Rainer Riesner, drawing on Ruth Finnegan
    - Jesus spoke 'the word of the Lord'
    - Jesus' self-presentation as Messiah
    - Jesus as a teacher of wisdom
    - Jesus told the twelve to 'learn' and transmit teachings
    - terminology of tradition in Paul
    - memorisation common in first-century Judaism
    - Jewish and Graeco-Roman teachers gathered students to perpetuate their teaching

# Using Bauckham's ideas in Acts

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- Can we trust eyewitness testimony?
  - Bauckham on recollective memory
    - unique, unusual or unexpected events
    - salience for rememberer
    - emotional involvement of rememberer
    - vivid imagery

# Using Bauckham's ideas in Acts

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- Can we trust eyewitness testimony?
  - Bauckham on recollective memory
    - irrelevant details
    - participant's perspective?
    - absence of dating information, but recollection of time of day
    - frequent re-telling



# Conclusion

Thank you!

My slides are available at  
Acts and More  
<http://steviewalton.info>