

This post will lay out the Negative case, arguing against the resolution, Resolved: The Book of Acts is Historically Reliable. Again, I am not necessarily agreeing or disagreeing with this argument; I'm giving it as I would in a debate.

The New Testament book of Acts is not historically reliable. Before showing that to be the case, I want to make two preliminary remarks, both of them related to the question of what it means for an ostensibly historical account (a narrative of what allegedly happened in the past) to be reliable.

First, when readers today want to know whether the book of Acts is reliable, they mean that they want to know whether the events that it narrates actually happened in the way it describes. Or not. Readers are not primarily interested in knowing if he wrote his account the way other authors in his day would have done. They are mainly interested in knowing whether his narrative happened the way he says it did.

Second, it is indeed important to know whether the author of the account had a solid and accurate knowledge of the laws, customs, and institutions of his day. If he did not, then obviously cannot be historically reliable. But even if he does, that in itself has no bearing on whether the stories he tells actually happened. An author may well know that in the city of Lystra there was a temple of Zeus outside the city walls; but that has no bearing on whether what he says *happened* in that temple is historically true or not. The affirmative side wants to argue that the fact that Luke was knowledgeable about the first century and that can easily be conceded. Of course he did. He lived in the first century. Naturally he knows about it. But that has no relevance to the question of whether the narratives he sets in the first century happened the way he says they did.

There are two major ways to check to see if Luke is historically accurate. The first is to see if

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