

Acts and the Letters: Examine the Connections

Compare accounts, inspect supporting evidence, and distinguish what the sources establish from what remains debated.

Romans

Acts places Paul in Greece before his journey toward Jerusalem; Romans' travel plans and collection fit that point in the third journey.

Compare

Acts 20:1–3

Romans 16:1–2, 21–23

What this shows

Acts places Paul in Greece before his journey toward Jerusalem; Romans' travel plans and collection fit that point in the third journey.

Brown treats direct Pauline authorship as not seriously disputed and compares a winter 57/58 date with an earlier revisionist chronology.

Murphy-O'Connor explains why chronology must weigh the letters and Acts without treating either as a complete timetable.

What this does not establish

Acts does not name the composition of Romans, so the fit is a reconstruction made by reading Acts with the letter.

Biblical references

Acts 20:1–3 · Romans 16:1–2, 21–23

Sources

- An Introduction to the New Testament

Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Doubleday, 1997). — Chapter 24, “Letter to the Romans,” “Summary of Basic Information”: “DATE” and “AUTHENTICITY”

- Paul: A Critical Life

Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, Paul: A Critical Life (Oxford University Press, 1996). — Chapter 1, “The Chronological Framework,” “The Evidence from the Pauline Letters” and “The Evidence from the Acts of the Apostles”

- The Pauline letters

Romans through Philemon, World English Bible (public domain).

- The Acts of the Apostles

Acts 7–28, World English Bible (public domain).

- Pauline Letters chronology

The project’s 67-row chronology, cross-referencing Acts and the letters and labeling debated dates.

1 Corinthians

Acts describes Paul’s extended Ephesian ministry, which fits the open work, opposition, and travel plans mentioned near the close of the letter.

Compare

Acts 19:1–20

1 Corinthians 16:5–12

What this shows

Acts describes Paul’s extended Ephesian ministry, which fits the open work, opposition, and travel plans mentioned near the close of the letter.

Brown surveys the historical background relevant to comparing the letter with Acts.

Murphy-O'Connor explains why chronology must weigh the letters and Acts without treating either as a complete timetable.

What this does not establish

Acts does not quote or name First Corinthians, so the link rests on converging movement and network details.

Biblical references

Acts 19:1–20 · 1 Corinthians 16:5–12

Sources

- An Introduction to the New Testament

Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Doubleday, 1997). — Chapter 22, “First Letter to the Corinthians,” “The Background”

- Paul: A Critical Life

Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford University Press, 1996). — Chapter 1, “The Chronological Framework,” “The Evidence from the Pauline Letters” and “The Evidence from the Acts of the Apostles”

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2 Corinthians

Acts places Paul in Macedonia after the Ephesian disturbance; the letter's movement from Troas and reunion with Titus coheres with that transition.

Compare

Acts 20:1–2

2 Corinthians 2:12–13; 7:5–7

What this shows

Acts places Paul in Macedonia after the Ephesian disturbance; the letter's movement from Troas and reunion with Titus coheres with that transition.

Brown treats authenticity as undisputed and compares a late-summer/early-autumn 57 date with AD 55/56 in a revisionist chronology, both in Macedonia.

Murphy-O'Connor explains why chronology must weigh the letters and Acts without treating either as a complete timetable.

What this does not establish

Acts does not narrate the painful visit or severe letter in detail, so the correspondence must supply much of the reconstruction.

Biblical references

Acts 20:1–2 · 2 Corinthians 2:12–13; 7:5–7

Sources

- An Introduction to the New Testament

Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Doubleday, 1997). — Chapter 23, “Second Letter to the Corinthians,” “Summary of Basic Information”: “DATE” and “AUTHENTICITY”

- Paul: A Critical Life

Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford University Press, 1996). — Chapter 1, “The Chronological Framework,” “The Evidence from the Pauline Letters” and “The Evidence from the Acts of the Apostles”

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Galatians

The early reconstruction reads the letter after the first journey and near the Antioch dispute and circumcision crisis surrounding Acts 13–15.

Compare

Acts 13:13–14:23; 15:1–35

Galatians 1:11–2:14

What this shows

The early reconstruction reads the letter after the first journey and near the Antioch dispute and circumcision crisis surrounding Acts 13–15.

Bruce argues for a South Galatian destination and early date as a reconstruction.

Brown surveys competing destination and date proposals.

Murphy-O'Connor explains why chronology must weigh the letters and Acts without treating either as a complete timetable.

What this does not establish

How Galatians 2 relates to the Jerusalem visits narrated in Acts remains disputed; Acts neither names the letter nor dates its composition.

Biblical references

Acts 13:13–14:23; 15:1–35 · Galatians 1:11–2:14

Sources

- The Epistle to the Galatians (NIGTC)

F. F. Bruce, The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text, NIGTC (Eerdmans, 1982) — the fullest modern case for the South Galatian destination and early date. — Introduction II.3, “The ‘South Galatian’ hypothesis”; V, “Date and Related Questions”
- An Introduction to the New Testament

Raymond E. Brown, An Introduction to the New Testament (Doubleday, 1997). — Chapter 19, “Letter to the Galatians,” “To Where and When?”
- Paul: A Critical Life

Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, Paul: A Critical Life (Oxford University Press, 1996). — Chapter 1, “The Chronological Framework,” “The Evidence from the Pauline Letters” and “The Evidence from the Acts of the Apostles”
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Romans through Philemon, World English Bible (public domain).
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Ephesians

A Roman imprisonment fits the end of Acts as a traditional comparison point, and Tychicus connects Ephesians with the Colossian network.

Compare

Acts 28:16–31	Ephesians 3:1; 6:20–22
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What this shows

A Roman imprisonment fits the end of Acts as a traditional comparison point, and Tychicus connects Ephesians with the Colossian network.

Murphy-O'Connor explains why chronology must weigh the letters and Acts without treating either as a complete timetable.

What this does not establish

Acts does not name Ephesians or identify its author, recipient, or delivery route.

Biblical references

Acts 28:16–31 · Ephesians 3:1; 6:20–22

Sources

- Paul: A Critical Life

Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford University Press, 1996). — Chapter 1, “The Chronological Framework,” “The Evidence from the Pauline Letters” and “The Evidence from the Acts of the Apostles”

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Philippians

Acts records the founding of the Philippian church and later reaches Paul's Roman custody, which frame the traditional reading of the letter.

Compare

Acts 16:11–40; 28:16–31

Philippians 1:12–14; 4:22

What this shows

Acts records the founding of the Philippian church and later reaches Paul's Roman custody, which frame the traditional reading of the letter.

Brown compares Ephesus around AD 56, Caesarea around AD 58–60, and Rome around AD 61–63 as proposed imprisonment settings.

Murphy-O'Connor explains why chronology must weigh the letters and Acts without treating either as a complete timetable.

What this does not establish

Acts does not state where or when Philippians was written.

Biblical references

Acts 16:11–40; 28:16–31 · Philippians 1:12–14; 4:22

Sources

- An Introduction to the New Testament

Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Doubleday, 1997). — Chapter 20, “Letter to the Philippians,” “From Where and When?”

- Paul: A Critical Life

Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford University Press, 1996). — Chapter 1, “The Chronological Framework,” “The Evidence from the Pauline Letters” and “The Evidence from the Acts of the Apostles”

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Romans through Philemon, *World English Bible* (public domain).

- The Acts of the Apostles

Acts 7–28, *World English Bible* (public domain).

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Colossians

The traditional Roman setting is compared with Acts’ house arrest, while overlapping names connect Colossians with Philemon without identifying a prison city or common dispatch.

Compare

Acts 28:16–31

Colossians 4:3, 7–18

What this shows

The traditional Roman setting is compared with Acts’ house arrest, while overlapping names connect Colossians with Philemon without identifying a prison city or common dispatch.

Brown compares Rome around AD 61–63 with Ephesian and Caesarean imprisonment proposals, while keeping authorship a separate question.

Murphy-O'Connor explains why chronology must weigh the letters and Acts without treating either as a complete timetable.

What this does not establish

Acts does not report the writing of Colossians or explain how the letter reached its recipients.

Biblical references

Acts 28:16–31 · Colossians 4:3, 7–18

Sources

- An Introduction to the New Testament

Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Doubleday, 1997). — Chapter 27, “Letter to the Colossians,” “From Where and When?”

- Paul: A Critical Life

Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford University Press, 1996). — Chapter 1, “The Chronological Framework,” “The Evidence from the Pauline Letters” and “The Evidence from the Acts of the Apostles”

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- The Acts of the Apostles

Acts 7–28, *World English Bible* (public domain).

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1 Thessalonians

Acts describes the Thessalonian mission and Paul’s Corinthian stay, while First Thessalonians names Timothy’s return with news from the church.

Compare

Acts 17:1–9; 18:1–11

1 Thessalonians 3:1–6

What this shows

Acts describes the Thessalonian mission and Paul’s Corinthian stay, while First Thessalonians names Timothy’s return with news from the church.

Brown surveys the background relevant to comparing the letter with Acts.

Murphy-O'Connor explains why chronology must weigh the letters and Acts without treating either as a complete timetable.

What this does not establish

Acts does not state the date of the letter or describe every movement named in the correspondence.

Biblical references

Acts 17:1–9; 18:1–11 · 1 Thessalonians 3:1–6

Sources

- An Introduction to the New Testament

Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Doubleday, 1997). — Chapter 18, “First Letter to the Thessalonians,” “The Background”
- Paul: A Critical Life

Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford University Press, 1996). — Chapter 1, “The Chronological Framework,” “The Evidence from the Pauline Letters” and “The Evidence from the Acts of the Apostles”
- The Pauline letters

Romans through Philemon, *World English Bible* (public domain).
- The Acts of the Apostles

Acts 7–28, *World English Bible* (public domain).
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2 Thessalonians

The traditional reading places it in the same Thessalonian-to-Corinthian movement narrated in Acts and associated with First Thessalonians.

Compare

Acts 17:1–9; 18:1–11

2 Thessalonians 1:1; 3:17

What this shows

The traditional reading places it in the same Thessalonian-to-Corinthian movement narrated in Acts and associated with First Thessalonians.

Brown’s date summary qualifies the conditional traditional date.

Brown’s origin summary qualifies the traditional setting without making Corinth attested in the letter.

Murphy-O’Connor explains why chronology must weigh the letters and Acts without treating either as a complete timetable.

What this does not establish

Acts does not name this letter, and the fit depends on accepting direct Pauline authorship.

Biblical references

Acts 17:1–9; 18:1–11 · 2 Thessalonians 1:1; 3:17

Sources

- An Introduction to the New Testament

Raymond E. Brown, An Introduction to the New Testament (Doubleday, 1997). — Chapter 26, “Second Letter to the Thessalonians,” “Summary of Basic Information,” “DATE”; Chapter 26, “Second Letter to the Thessalonians,” “Summary of Basic Information,” “FROM”
- Paul: A Critical Life

Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, Paul: A Critical Life (Oxford University Press, 1996). — Chapter 1, “The Chronological Framework,” “The Evidence from the Pauline Letters” and “The Evidence from the Acts of the Apostles”
- The Pauline letters

Romans through Philemon, World English Bible (public domain).
- The Acts of the Apostles

Acts 7–28, World English Bible (public domain).
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1 Timothy

The proposed setting comes after the final scene in Acts and therefore depends on a reconstructed release and later travel.

Compare

Acts 28:30–31

1 Timothy 1:3–4

What this shows

The proposed setting comes after the final scene in Acts and therefore depends on a reconstructed release and later travel.

Brown surveys direct Pauline and later Pauline-tradition authorship proposals.

Murphy-O'Connor explains why chronology must weigh the letters and Acts without treating either as a complete timetable.

What this does not establish

Acts supplies a boundary: it does not attest the Macedonian-Ephesian itinerary assumed by the traditional reading.

Biblical references

Acts 28:30–31 · 1 Timothy 1:3–4

Sources

- An Introduction to the New Testament

Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Doubleday, 1997). — Chapter 30, “Pastoral Letter: The First to Timothy,” “Who Wrote Titus and I Timothy?”

- Paul: A Critical Life

Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford University Press, 1996). — Chapter 1, “The Chronological Framework,” “The Evidence from the Pauline Letters” and “The Evidence from the Acts of the Apostles”

- The Pauline letters

Romans through Philemon, *World English Bible* (public domain).

- The Acts of the Apostles

Acts 7–28, *World English Bible* (public domain).

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2 Timothy

Acts ends with an earlier Roman house arrest; the final-imprisonment setting therefore lies beyond the narrative and is a traditional reconstruction.

Compare

What this shows

Acts ends with an earlier Roman house arrest; the final-imprisonment setting therefore lies beyond the narrative and is a traditional reconstruction.

Brown surveys direct Pauline and later pastoral proposals.

Murphy-O'Connor explains why chronology must weigh the letters and Acts without treating either as a complete timetable.

What this does not establish

The gap after Acts is decisive: the narrative cannot directly verify the proposed later imprisonment.

Biblical references

Acts 28:30–31 · 2 Timothy 1:8, 15–17; 2:9; 4:6–18

Sources

- An Introduction to the New Testament

Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Doubleday, 1997). — Chapter 31, “Pastoral Letter: The Second to Timothy,” “II Timothy and Possibilities about the Pastorals”

- Paul: A Critical Life

Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford University Press, 1996). — Chapter 1, “The Chronological Framework,” “The Evidence from the Pauline Letters” and “The Evidence from the Acts of the Apostles”

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Romans through Philemon, *World English Bible* (public domain).

- The Acts of the Apostles

Acts 7–28, *World English Bible* (public domain).

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Titus

The proposed Cretan and Nicopolis itinerary comes after Acts ends, so it cannot be read as an event narrated in the Acts travel account.

Compare

Acts 28:30–31	Titus 1:5; 3:12
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What this shows

The proposed Cretan and Nicopolis itinerary comes after Acts ends, so it cannot be read as an event narrated in the Acts travel account.

Brown surveys the background relevant to Titus’s itinerary.

Murphy-O’Connor explains why chronology must weigh the letters and Acts without treating either as a complete timetable.

What this does not establish

Acts provides no direct evidence of Paul leaving Titus in Crete or wintering at Nicopolis.

Biblical references

Acts 28:30–31 · Titus 1:5; 3:12

Sources

- An Introduction to the New Testament

Raymond E. Brown, An Introduction to the New Testament (Doubleday, 1997). — Chapter 29, “Pastoral Letter: To Titus,” “The Background (of Titus)”
- Paul: A Critical Life

Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, Paul: A Critical Life (Oxford University Press, 1996). — Chapter 1, “The Chronological Framework,” “The Evidence from the Pauline Letters” and “The Evidence from the Acts of the Apostles”
- The Pauline letters

Romans through Philemon, World English Bible (public domain).
- The Acts of the Apostles

Acts 7–28, World English Bible (public domain).
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Philemon

Acts' Roman house arrest provides the traditional narrative setting, while Colossians supplies overlapping names that make a shared imprisonment plausible.

Compare

Acts 28:16–31

Philemon 1:1, 9–10, 22–24

What this shows

Acts' Roman house arrest provides the traditional narrative setting, while Colossians supplies overlapping names that make a shared imprisonment plausible.

Brown compares Ephesus around AD 55, Caesarea around AD 58–60, and Rome around AD 61–63, judging the evidence rather than treating the prison city as named.

Murphy-O'Connor explains why chronology must weigh the letters and Acts without treating either as a complete timetable.

What this does not establish

Acts does not mention Philemon, Onesimus, or the letter's dispatch.

Biblical references

Acts 28:16–31 · Philemon 1:1, 9–10, 22–24

Sources

- An Introduction to the New Testament
Raymond E. Brown, An Introduction to the New Testament (Doubleday, 1997). — Chapter 21, “Letter to Philemon,” “From Where and When?”
- Paul: A Critical Life
Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, Paul: A Critical Life (Oxford University Press, 1996). — Chapter 1, “The Chronological Framework,” “The Evidence from the Pauline Letters” and “The Evidence from the Acts of the Apostles”
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