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## The “We Passages” in the Book of Acts

The author of Acts occasionally employs the pronoun “we” when recounting the travels of Paul and his companions (16:10–17; 20:5–15; 21:1–8; 27:1–28:16). Scholars call these portions of Acts the “we passages.”

Throughout history, most Bible readers have assumed that the author of Acts means to include himself as being among Paul’s company in these portions of the narrative. Thus it is traditionally held that the author of Acts accompanied Paul for portions of his second and third missionary journeys.

Some scholars, however, do not think that Acts could have been authored by one of Paul’s companions. The book is anonymous, after all, and (these scholars claim) it presents a rather different picture of Paul from the one that we obtain from his own letters. But what, then, should we make of the “we passages”? Those scholars who question whether the author of Acts was actually a companion of Paul usually explain them in one of the following ways (objections to the explanations are given beneath each one):

**Some anonymous author is falsely claiming to have been a companion of Paul in order to gain more credibility for his work.**

But why wouldn’t that person simply write the book pseudepigraphically? Why not write the book falsely in the name of

some famous or illustrious companion of Paul and pass it off as that person's work, as opposed to taking the subtle approach and leaving readers to guess whether the book might be written by someone who occasionally traveled with the apostle Paul?

**An unknown author is using a source (a travel diary?) kept by someone who worked with Paul and is copying from that work without changing the pronouns.**

But in the Gospel of Luke, this same author does make stylistic changes in the material that he takes from Mark's Gospel. Why would he copy a source so slavishly when writing the book of Acts?

**The use of the pronoun "we" is simply a literary device to help readers experience the story firsthand. The "we" is not meant to include the author in the story so much as it is meant to include the book's readers. Luke wants to put his readers on the boat with Paul so that they will witness what transpires in the story as though they were there when it was happening.**

But why use this device in such a hit-and-miss fashion? Why not use it elsewhere in the story, or, for that matter, why not use it consistently throughout the narrative? What is there about these specific passages that would call for such intimate involvement of readers when other passages apparently do not?

Due to the objections noted, most scholars think that the "we passages" are best understood in a straightforward manner: the

author of Acts (and also of Luke's Gospel) did travel with Paul on a few occasions.