

## **Acts 1**

There is little doubt that Acts was written by Luke. He was probably a Gentile, and Colossians 4:14 tells us he was a physician by trade. The early church fathers all attributed it to him. In some of the passages concerning Paul's travels, the author uses the plural pronoun "we". Luke was one of Paul's travel companions and all other travel companions can be eliminated because of being in other places. 2Timothy 4:11 Some letters to the early churches were forged under the name of one of the Apostles. If someone were to have forged Acts, there is no reason for them to add Luke's name as he was a relatively obscure figure mentioned only 3 times in the New Testament.

The book ends with Paul's first imprisonment and by that we can date the time in which it was written to the early 60s. It was in 64 AD that Nero turned against the Christians.

The gospel of Luke was also written to "most excellent Theophilus". The name means "lover of god". The title "most excellent" seems to indicate that the recipient was a Roman official. His purpose in these two volumes is stated in Luke 1:3. He wanted to convey the details of what he had investigated. It doesn't mean a complete history of all that happened to the early church, but follows the thread about which he had information. He seems to be addressing both Gentiles and Jews.

The details that he gives show us that he was a careful investigator, recording traditions of the times, from which we have reliable, historical information. Luke writes about the beginning of the church and its advancement from Jews to Gentiles. His focus is the spread of Christianity in the Roman world. Perhaps he was answering a question Theophilus asked about the growing number of Christians. Chapters 1-12 deal with the mission of the Jerusalem Church, and 13-28 the mission of Paul the Apostle.

Luke 24:49 tells of the need for the disciples to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. When Jesus ascended, the disciples seemed to be just as fearful and powerless as when He was crucified. The Gospel of the Kingdom was now in their hands, but they need power. In Luke's 1<sup>st</sup> volume he told of the unique ministry of Jesus. Now in the 2<sup>nd</sup> volume, he will show how that ministry was carried on through the Apostles walking and teaching in the power of the Spirit.

Verse 1-2 tells us that Luke's intent in writing the Gospel of Luke was to relay what Jesus began to do and teach from the beginning of His ministry to His ascension. Does the term "began" imply that He is still at work in His disciples?

Jesus' teaching was not only in word but demonstrated by His life. This is what the Apostles were going to be sharing with the world. Later it would be given the term, the Apostles' doctrine. If we are going to convey that, our lives must demonstrate that the message does have the power to transform us and free us from the bondage of habitual sin. Our teaching must be like that of Jesus, correct deeds and truthful words.

3 If they were going to put their life on the line, they needed to know that Jesus was alive and could indeed conquer death. A list of the appearances is given in 1Corinthians 15:5-8. There are others not listed there. The numerous appearances, eating food, cooking a meal, repeating an earlier miracle, all showed that He was indeed alive. During that time, He continued to teach them about the Kingdom of God. Is it necessary for you to know He's alive?

4-5 They must have been excited, once they finally believed that it was indeed Jesus. If He conquered death, then they not need fear it. (Luke 24:53) They probably wanted to shout it on the rooftops, but Jesus said to wait for the power, the Father's promise (Ezekiel 36:25-27), the Holy Spirit. John 7:39; 14:16,26; 16:7 Do we need the same? Why? They had some experience with the Holy Spirit. John 14:17; Matthew 10:20

6-7 The age of the church was something completely foreign to the thinking of the Apostles. We can hardly blame them, for there is little distinction between the first and second coming, and few clues to the time in-between. They had been waiting for the earthly kingdom, the one we refer to as the Millennial Kingdom. It was surprising to them that it did not immediately develop. The two on the Emmaus Road were disappointed it hadn't happened yet. Luke 24:21 The prophecies about a descendent of David reigning over a liberated Israel are many. Since Jesus died to redeem man, they saw nothing to keep it from happening right then. But Jesus said it was not for them to know, nor is it for us to know the times the Father has set. Mark 13:33-37 Why do you think that is?

8 This verse is a summary or outline of the book of Acts. The Holy Spirit gives us power to be the witness we should be. We are all a witness. Some are more effective because they have witnessed more of Jesus. That is a result of their yielding to the Holy Spirit. As you witness the transformation the Spirit of God brings to your life, the Spirit prompts you to share what Jesus did with actions and words. If they are done in the Spirit, then they are His actions and words continuing to reach out to a lost world. What does it mean to be a witness?

9-11 The ascension! See Luke 24:50. A good author overlaps the ending of book one with the beginning of book 2. Why is this the perfect place to separate the two books? Why two angels? John 8:17 Why is this different from Ezekiel 10:18-

19? He will return in the same way. Zechariah 14:4; Matthew 24:30; Revelation 1:7 How does His impending return motivate us?

12-14 Note that they were constantly in prayer. Also notice that the family of Jesus is now on board. (John 7:5) Resurrection probably changed their mind and heart. They are all together, disciples, family, and women followers. That was a bit unusual for that time. The incredible witness of resurrection was breaking down cultural tradition. It went to something deeper and more meaningful.

15-20 My views on this are controversial. It is my belief that Peter was acting out of the flesh when he decided he must pick someone to take Judas' place. Most commentators believe the action was inspired. Peter quoted Psalm 69:25 and 109:8. Jesus told them to wait. Peter did not wait but acted. I think it may be a lesson for us on the need to wait on the Lord and let Him work.

21-25 "The Scripture says this so we must fulfill it! We'll pick for God." Who chose them? Jesus! And now Peter presumes they can select the 12<sup>th</sup> disciple or at least give God the option of one or the other? Peter did what we so often do. Here are our choices Lord. Approve one of our choices. On the foundation of New Jerusalem are the names of the 12 apostles. (Revelation 21:14) Is Paul's name on there or Matthias? Paul said that God chose him to be an apostle. (Ephesians 1:1)

26 The casting of lots involved putting the name of each person on a separate stone and putting those stones in a jar. The jar would be shaken until one of the stones came out. That was God's choice. Now, just for a minute, think about what this looks like. There they are praying and they break from prayer and waiting for the outpouring of the Spirit, and they pick a couple of guys and put their names on rocks and out of the jar – bingo – Matthias. "You are the winner." God may have accepted those means in the past, (Proverbs 16:33) but He is about to pour out His Spirit, His personal presence living in each of us. Does it seem consistent to you?

My humble opinion is that Matthias was man's choice and therefore we never hear of him again. God chose the Apostle Paul. He wrote the majority of the New Testament. He evangelized a huge part of the world. The opposing view sites Peter's qualification that the replacement must have been with them from the baptism of Jesus to the ascension. Paul didn't meet that criteria. I would ask where he came up with that criteria? MacArthur argues that if it was not God's will then when they prayed the Lord could have told them to wait. I would respond, "He already did!" and they haven't received the Spirit to be able to hear the inaudible "wait!". Honest believers seeking the truth disagree over whether this was an inspired decision or man having his way.