

## Introduction

The title "Acts of the Apostles" (Praxeis Apostolon) was first used by Irenaeus in the late 2nd century. It is not known whether this was an existing title or one invented by Irenaeus; it does seem clear, however, that it was not given by the author. The book was written around 89-90 AD. The author is Luke, and it is a continuation of the account known as the Gospel of Luke.

I say all this because there were a lot of extraordinary events that took place just over 2,000 years ago. The events changed history. Our calendar is now based on BC and AD because of those events. There were a lot of claims about the events that happened. John wrote that if all the things that Jesus did were written in detail, the world could not contain the books that would be written. So, there were lots of events that took place. Luke investigated all these events carefully and in the gospel of Luke, he gives the exact truth of what happened.

(John 21:25) “And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.”

In our passage today, Luke gives us two reasons why he wrote this gospel for a man named Theophilus. Let's read the passage.

(Luke 1:1-4) “Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, {2} just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, {3} it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; {4} so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.”

### 1. The Author and Recipient

Luke is the author of the gospel. Luke was a central figure in the New Testament, but we know very little about him. Before we look at the text, let's glean what we can from other passages. Last week we finished up the book of Colossians. Paul wrote the book of Colossians while he was in prison in Rome. In his closing remarks, he tells the Colossians that Luke, the beloved physician, sends his greetings. Luke knew the Colossians, and they knew him. Luke was one of Paul's traveling companions. He was part of Paul's apostolic team. Therefore, all the churches in Asia and Europe knew Luke.

(Col 4:14) Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and also Demas.

We gather from the passage that **Luke was loved by everyone**. The Greek word is *agapetos* (Strong's G27), which means beloved or dear. When I think of someone that is loved by everyone, several things come to mind. First, he was probably very loving. You reap what you sow. He loved people and so people loved him. He probably served people and was very unselfish. He was probably very kind towards other. So, the first thing that we find out about Luke was that he was loved by everyone. If there is one thing that I want our church to be known as, it is a loving church. Jesus said that by this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.

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(John 13:35) "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

The second thing that we find in this passage is that **Luke was a physician**. He was obviously very well educated. I am not sure what kind of training he went through in his day, but physicians today typically have eight to twelve years of schooling and interning after graduating with their bachelor degree. Luke had medical training, and was regarded as a physician. Greek scholars point out many phrases that he used in Luke and Acts that would only have been used by physicians.

I like the balance that Luke brought to Paul's team. Many people were healed through Paul's ministry. If you recall the account of Paul on the island of Malta, everyone on the island got healed. God heals people through spiritual means. In this passage, Paul identifies Luke as a physician. There is nothing malicious or evil about him being a physician. People understood that a physician helped bring healing to people through natural means. I suspect that Luke was a physician that ministered healing in natural ways and spiritual ways. I can see him praying with his patients. I love the balance that Luke brings. There are some people in the church that say that every doctor is a liar and they speak of the medical world in demeaning ways. Luke was a physician, and he was a man of truth. He wrote this gospel so that people would know the exact truth. When we minister to people, we want them to be healed. Whether God heals supernaturally or through a physician, it really does not matter to me. My heart is to see people made whole and to be healed. I think this is God's heart.

**Luke was a Gentile.** In Colossians 4:10-14, Paul writes that Aristarchus, Mark, and Justus are the only fellow workers who are from the circumcision. The circumcision was the mark of a Jewish man. The Greeks and Gentiles were not circumcised. The NIV translates it this way, "these are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God..." Since Luke was with Paul, he could not possibly have been a Jew.

(Col 4:10-11) "Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas's cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him); {11} and also Jesus who is called Justus; these are the only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are from the circumcision, and they have proved to be an encouragement to me."

(NIV Col 4:10-11) "My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) {11} Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me."

Although not contained in Scripture, church tradition has it that Luke was from Antioch. During the persecution and dispersion, many believers left Jerusalem, and some of them went to Antioch and preached the gospel to the Gentiles. The church in Jerusalem heard about it and sent Barnabas. After he surveyed the situation, he went and found Paul, and they planted the church in Antioch. It is here that Paul and Luke became close friends and co-workers. Throughout most of the book of Acts, Luke accompanies Paul.

It is also thought that Luke wrote these letters from Rome around 62 AD when Paul was under house arrest. Luke was there serving and taking care of Paul. He was also busy writing the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts.

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Most theologians agree that the Gospel of Luke was written to Gentiles. It would make sense. He was a Gentile. He accompanied Paul, who was an apostle to the Gentiles. Luke's ministry was also geared towards Gentile believers. So, it makes sense that he would write to Gentiles.

Another prison epistle written by Paul was his letter to Philemon. In his salutation, Paul identifies Epaphras as his fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus. Then, he mentions Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke. He calls them his fellow workers. From this, we gather that Luke was with Paul while he was in prison, and he was helping Paul do kingdom work. **Luke was a fellow worker.** The Greek word is *sunergos* (Strong's G4904), which means joined together in work. The joining together is much stronger than just another worker at your place of employment. The joining together is more like oxen who have been yoked together and are plowing together. They are plowing at the same time. They are plowing the same row. They are moving together. One is not overpowering the other and causing the row to be crooked. They are joined together in all respects. There is a unity of purpose and spirit. Paul and Luke were joined together in preaching the gospel, planting churches, and encouraging the leaders in those churches.

(Philemon 1:23-24) "Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. {24} And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers."

**Luke was an author.** Not only did he write the Gospel of Luke, but he also wrote the book of Acts. Notice how the book of Acts begins. "The first account I composed, Theophilus..." Both of these books were written to Theophilus. Luke's introduction to Acts ties the books together. They are tied together sequentially, and they are also tied together by the author and recipient.

(Acts 1:1) "The first account I composed, Theophilus..."

I want to mention education again. Paul was very well educated. God also used him to write thirteen of the twenty-six books of the New Testament. He may also have written the book of Hebrews. God also uses Luke, a highly educated physician to write the two biggest books in the New Testament, the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. God also used Peter and John, fishermen who did not have formal educations. Formal education is not a requirement to be used by God. But, God chose to use some well educated people for some special projects like authoring.

The problem with some of the education today is that the doctrines of men are often stressed. We want people to focus on the word of God, not the teachings of men. We want to help people grow strong in their faith, not weakened by unbelief and false teachings. Seminaries have their place. They can help us learn Hebrew and Greek. They can help us learn how to put together expository messages. They can help us in many ways. I encourage young people to get an education, no matter what field they are in. They just need to be very careful about the liberal philosophies that are taught.

In both Luke 1 and Acts 1, Luke identifies the person that he is writing to as Theophilus. The Greek word for God is *theo*. There are four Greek words for love, and *philos* is one of those. *Philos* is a family or brotherly type of love. The word *Philadelphia* means city of brotherly love. *Theophilus* means a lover of God. Theophilus was one who sought after God. He was one that was pressing in to know God more. He was one who hungered for God's word. He wanted more truth. He wanted to know the exact truth. Since the word became flesh and the word is God, you will not love God anymore than you love His word. Theophilus was a lover of God and a lover of truth.

## 2. The purpose of the Gospel of Luke

There is a purpose for every book in the Bible. For example, **the Gospel of John was written so that people would believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that they would have eternal life.** John clearly states his purpose of writing in John 20:30-31.

(John 20:30-31) “Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; {31} but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”

**John wrote 1 John to give assurance about having eternal life.** He says, “these things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.” It is a great sequel to the Gospel of John, which was written to unbelievers, trying to persuade them to become believers. This was written to those who had become believers and to give them assurance and confidence in their salvation.

(1 John 5:12-13) “He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. {13} These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

**The purpose of the Gospel of Luke is for us to know the exact truth about what we have been taught.** He tells us that many had undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, but he wanted to “write it out for you in consecutive order...so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.” Luke wanted people to know the exact truth. He wanted us to have confidence in our faith. He wanted us to be exact and well informed about the matters of our faith. He wanted to strengthen our faith.

(Luke 1:1-4) “Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, {2} just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, {3} it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; {4} so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.”

Therefore, Luke examined everything. He interviewed eyewitnesses. Then, he compiled this account in consecutive order to give us confidence about everything that happened in Jesus’ earthly life and ministry. We do not have blind faith. There is substance to our faith, and Luke, the Physician, gives us some research and evidence.

We find out a little bit more about the scope of the Gospel of Luke in the book of Acts. He says, “the first account (the Gospel of Luke) I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen.” Luke defines very clearly the period of time he is covering in the Gospel of Luke. **Luke starts with all that Jesus began to do, and ends with His instructions to the disciples to remain in Jerusalem. Acts begins where the Gospel of Luke ends.**

(Acts 1:1-2) “The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and

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teach, {2} until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen.”

Why did Luke examine everything carefully and write the exact truth in consecutive order? There had to be a compelling reason to devote the time and energy that he put into this extensive project. First, **Luke was led by the Holy Spirit to research and write.** In 2 Peter 1:20-21, we are told that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” Researching and writing were not an act of Luke's human will. He was led and moved by the Holy Spirit to do this.

(2 Peter 1:20-21) “But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, {21} for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”

In 2 Timothy 3:16, we find that “all scripture is inspired by God.” The word inspired literally means God-breathed. The Greek word is theopneustos. Theo is the Greek word for God and pneustos is the Greek word for breathed. We get words like pneumatic, from this word. Pneumatic means pertaining to air or gases. **Luke was inspired by God to investigate and write this gospel account.**

(2 Tim 3:16-17) “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; {17} so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

There is a second reason for writing the Gospel of Luke. **Luke wrote so that Theophilus would know the exact truth.** It is only natural for stories to spread, and sometimes the fish get bigger over time. Theophilus wanted to know just how big the fish really was.

I was reminded about how things get shared or slanted a certain way to give certain impressions. A number of years ago, when Al Gore was running for President, a certain story came out. They wanted to make his great-great uncle look better than he really was. They put out the following paragraph about Gunther Gore. The same story has been published for Bush, Biden, and many others. It is false.

*"Gunther Gore was a famous rancher in early Tennessee history. His business empire grew to include acquisition of valuable equestrian assets and intimate dealings with the Tennessee railroad. Beginning in 1883, he devoted several years of his life to service at a government facility, finally taking leave to resume his dealings with the railroad. In 1887, he was a key player in a vital investigation run by the renowned Pinkerton Detective Agency. In 1889, Gunther passed away during an important civic function held in his honor when the platform upon which he was standing collapsed.*

What was the exact truth about Gunther Gore. A newspaper clipping, with Gunther Gore's picture in it, said this, **"Gunther Gore, horse thief, sent to Tennessee Prison 1885, escaped 1887, robbed the Tennessee Flyer six times. Caught by Pinkerton detectives, convicted and hanged in 1889."** Gunther was not a famous rancher, but a horse thief. His acquisition of equestrian assets was stealing horses. His service at a government facility was his time spent in a Tennessee Prison. Sometimes things are embellished. Luke investigated everything carefully and wrote the exact truth. Here is the third reason for writing. **Luke wrote the Gospel of Luke to clear up any confusion**

**about the order that all these events occurred.** Theophilus, wanted to know the exact truth about the claim. He also wanted everything to be given in consecutive order. As I was meditating on the importance of consecutive order a few weeks ago, I remembered putting together a bar for my parents a few years ago. They added a sun room to their house and had me install a flat screen TV on one wall. They bought a bar and some stools to go in front of the TV. It came in a couple of heavy boxes and I was the one that assembled it.

There were lots of different bags of pieces and parts in the boxes. They had some crude diagrams and vague instructions in the manual that came with it. As I assembled it, I got a step out of order. When I tried to attach one part to the bar, it would not fit. As I went back to the instructions, I realized that it had to be assembled before some other pieces that I had already assembled. Therefore, I had to disassemble some parts and go back to the point where the certain piece had to be added. After doing that, I was able to get everything assembled correctly. The exact order was vital to the proper assembly of the bar.

In this passage, Luke wants us to know the consecutive order that things happened. It is not that the other gospels were incorrect. They are truth. The accounts and narratives are all true, but the order was not necessarily given chronologically. Luke wrote his account in the right consecutive order.

### **Conclusion/Applications**

As we come to a close, what can we apply from these few verses? First, **become a student of God's word.** God wants us to be confident in our faith. The word faith, *pistis*, means to be convinced. This is not theory; these are historical facts. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. To become confident in our faith, we must pay attention to the word of God. We must give attention to what Luke and others have given to us. The word of God is crucial to our faith. Make a fresh commitment to read the word of God. Consider reading through the Bible next year. Consider a Bible memorization program. Consider doing your own study of the book of Luke as we go through it together this coming year. Make a fresh commitment to the word of God. It will help you become more confident in your faith.

Second, **become a doer of God's word.** The accounts in Luke are historical, but they are meant to be more than historical. They are examples for us. They show us the pattern of Jesus' ministry. They show us what our New Testament experience is supposed to look like. Make a fresh commitment to do the things that we read about. The book of Luke showed the acts of Jesus. The book of Acts showed the acts of the apostles. What Jesus began to do and modeled for the disciples was acted out in Acts. God's desire is that we learn from the teachings and examples of Jesus and the apostles. He wants these things to be part of our life. These teachings were not just for those who lived two thousand years ago. They are for us today.

Today is the last Sunday of the month. We take time the last Sunday of the month to pray together as a congregation. God has called the church to be a house of prayer. That does not mean just a few people who feel called to the ministry of intercession; that is all of us. As we begin in prayer, let me encourage you to participate. Don't be shy. If the Holy Spirit prompts you to pray, pray. Be bold and pray. Let me also encourage you to use a microphone so that everyone can hear you and agree with you.

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Second, let me encourage you to limit your prayers to one or two minutes. We want lots of people to pray. We do not want a few people praying ten minutes each.

Third, let me encourage us to follow Paul's exhortations last week. Let us keep alert in prayer and have an attitude of thanksgiving. We want to begin with some praise and thanksgiving. Then, as we offer petitions, we want to maintain that attitude of thanksgiving.

I will now turn the meeting over to Larry, who is our pastor over the prayer ministry.

**Introduction** (Luke 1:1-4, John 21:25)

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- Luke was a \_\_\_\_\_. (Col 4:10-11)
- Luke was a \_\_\_\_\_ . (Phil 1:23-24)
- Luke was an \_\_\_\_\_. (Luke 1, Acts 1:1)

**2. The purpose of the Gospel of Luke**

- The Gospel of John was written so that people would \_\_\_\_\_ that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that they would have eternal life. (John 20:30-31.)
- John wrote 1 John to give \_\_\_\_\_ about eternal life. (1 John 5:12-13)
- The purpose of the Gospel of Luke is for us to know the \_\_\_\_\_ about what we have been taught. (Luke 1:1-4)
- \_\_\_\_\_ starts with all that Jesus began to do, and ends with His instructions to the disciples to remain in Jerusalem.(Acts 1:1-2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ begins where the Gospel of Luke ends. (Acts 1:1-2)
- Luke was led by the \_\_\_\_\_ to research and write. (2 Peter 1:20-21)
- Luke was \_\_\_\_\_ by God to write. (2 Tim 3:16-17)
- Luke wrote so that Theophilus would know the exact \_\_\_\_\_. (Luke 1:1-4)
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