

Acts Chapters 1 – 12 ‘The Gospel and Growth’ Some notes on the Introductory disc

Beginning at the Beginning

The introduction to both scrolls is found in Luke 1:1-4

The author of Acts and the gospel that bears his name is Dr Luke, he makes 5 points:

- 1. In v1 – Not unexpected ‘things’ but those that in Jesus, are the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies plus the accounts of eyewitnesses and servants of the word.*
- 2. In v2 – Luke was **not** an eyewitness to the events he recorded in the gospel but was, for events in the second part of Acts.*
- 3. In v3 – Luke investigated the plentiful material available to him thoroughly for its accuracy.*
- 4. In v1 – Luke refers to ‘many. There were many authors, among them Mark and Paul, so he had reliable and often first-hand information to use for both documents.*
- 5. Theophilus was supplied with **those** reliable documents in which he could place confidence as a ground for his faith. These confirmed his previous knowledge of Jesus. He had solid evidence, and eyewitness testimonies. His faith could cost him his life!*

How important that confidence is to us too! The written account is to be the ground of our Christian faith and assurance.

Detective hats on!

Luke was: A trained Physician, from Syrian Antioch. A Gentile believer, a non-Jew who may have been a convert to Judaism a ‘God-fearer’ – If so, he would have had much knowledge

The clues!

*In Acts 16:10 he is a part of Paul’s team. In Troas ‘we’ got ready to cross to Macedonia
(In the intervening 7 or so years it’s possible he stayed to pastor the Philippian believers)*

*In Acts 20:6 he is part of the team sailing now **to** Troas, taking relief to Judean believers*

In Acts 21:17 he is in Jerusalem with Paul and was in the area for two years

In Acts 27 Luke is with Paul as he is sent by sea to Rome to face trial by Caesar

*Named in Paul’s letters as present in **that** 2-year imprisonment*

Named as present during the imprisonment which ended in Paul’s death around AD 67/68

Where his information came from

What did he probably discover for himself? *He was in Jerusalem during those two years and may have travelled out into Judea and maybe to Galilee. His descriptions in the gospel and Acts are very accurate!*

Who did he meet in Jerusalem, *who were ‘sources’ for both the gospel and Acts?
He met James, Jesus’ brother, now the leader of the Jerusalem church, and all the elders, probably Peter and John among them, church members and most likely Mary whose memories he told so personally in his gospel.*

What other material was around? *Many written and oral accounts of the words and deeds of Jesus were circulating, in an era of oral learning and excellent memories!*

The where and when of the ‘Acts of the Apostles’

Luke most likely commenced both the gospel and the Acts while Paul was imprisoned in Rome around AD 60. Probably Acts was completed at that time, as no details of Paul’s acquittal, release or of Nero’s persecution when Paul and Peter were executed, are included.

Thoughts on the 'naming' of this document... probably not by Luke!

Some say 'The Acts of Apostles' focusses too much on the humans involved. Others suggest 'The Acts of the Holy Spirit' But, does that minimise the part God intends us to play? Possibly, 'The continuing words and deeds of Jesus, by his Spirit through his apostles' or 'Acts of Spirit-filled men'

Imagining Luke's musings as he comes to write the Acts.

From all those months of writing the gospel he would have recalled all he has written about Jesus.....

Some quotes! "Luke realises that the Jesus he has never met, has been **with** the disciples, but is now **in** them and in all believers, including himself" "In fact, Jesus had never been so really **with** them as when he **left** them!" "So, it's not Part 1 'Jesus' and now part 2 'the Church' but it's the two stages of the ministry of Jesus, first on earth, personally and publicly, and then, Jesus from heaven by his Spirit, through his apostles."

What Luke has already told Theophilus

In Luke 24:44–48 Jesus opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and to reassure them that he was going to send them what his Father had promised, power from on high. They were to stay in Jerusalem until they were clothed with that power, the Holy Spirit.

Some notes on the highlights of Luke's story – its beginnings and its end?

You will discover.....

Luke's recap and expansion on his ending to the gospel

The coming of the Holy Spirit empowering, transforming, and equipping for the task

The young church in action, glorious fellowship and outreach

Growth and opposition, persecution and death

The scattering of believers, and the spread of the gospel (Paul is a part of this!)

Luke's concentration on the gospel's spread from Jerusalem, westwards to Rome

Luke's evangelist's heart – salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ

Luke's 'warts and all' approach

'The great divide' between Jew and Gentile to be completely dismantled!

It starts with Peter and his mission to Roman, Gentile Cornelius

It continues with Paul's 'Arrest' by Jesus as he heads to wipe out more believers

It develops with Paul's growth and preparation for his coming ministry

His mission 'kick-started' with news of Gentiles becoming believers in Antioch

Teamed with Barnabas, Paul begins his mission in earnest

The shift in emphasis from Jerusalem, **the capital of Judaism**, to Syrian Antioch

The progress of the gospel westwards to Rome, **the capital of the world!**

The climate in which the gospel was able to reach the ends of the earth

It reached us! The incomplete story!

Completion will come, when Jesus returns as he said he would

The never- ending story in which we now have our part

To the ends of the earth and to the people next door in your street

The story of Vijay Menon

The Great Commission

'The Acts of Spirit-filled believers in the Lord Jesus Christ until he comes in his glory'

Your role in the Great Commission

The end of the story of Vijay Menon and those who prayed!

Your prayer