

Acts 1

The Author

Luke wrote a two-book series on the life and enduring effects of Jesus. Dr. Luke was a detail-oriented well-educated man who was on a mission to capture the details and facts from first-hand witnesses. He wanted to do the primary research himself.

How badly do you want to know the truths about God? Are you willing to put in the work? Are you satisfied to hear a *microwavable message*; or do you have a shovel and flashlight? As Christians, we need to dig down and make use of original language study helps and other tools to increase our understanding of scripture. To be honest, if you believed most information written about scripture or about Jesus you would have a lot of misinformation. There are a lot of people who just re-quote or misquote.

¹⁵ Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)

Luke was rewarded for not being satisfied to kick back and hear it second hand. There is a difference between being a Christian and being a disciple. The stages of Christian maturity revolve around how we get our *spiritual nutrition*. Are we fed by others; or do we gather our own meat? The word disciple is all about discipline and effort and ongoing commitment levels.

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, ² just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. ³ With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught. (Luke 1)



Luke compiled these facts and dates and accounts for an inquiring mind. Theophilus could have been an underwriter for Luke's journey, or a friend or a public official. Theophilus dispatched Doctor Luke the physician because he wanted to know every pertinent fact surrounding the birth, life and death of Jesus. Gather all of the facts, and leave nothing out! Luke is the gospel with the most information about the family and humanity of Jesus of Nazareth. Luke is filled with details like what a detective would gather. There are a lot of societal settings and community details provided for context and relevance.

Acts is the blow-by-blow account of what came next, after Jesus left for heaven. The Holy Spirit held back until after Jesus goes to heaven. Jesus told us in advance that it was advantageous for him to step away from the earthly spotlight on earth to send in the Holy Spirit. That message is for believers already reading his word. The Holy Spirit will not take attention away from Jesus; but he will empower us to continue in the next steps of our faith. After salvation comes spiritual growth. Where do we go for that?

The Functionality of the God Head Trinity

This leads to a question regarding the God-Head. What is the practical working relationship between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit? They are co-equals, but there are differences in their functions.

Jesus is the only path of salvation; so, this is always job #1; and the top priority for benefit of man. If you are not saved, nothing else matters. You are going to hell. Therefore, Jesus had to become the visible, audible image of an unseen God. Any time someone sees God in the New or Old Testament it is Jesus. He is the door, or the starting line of our marathon. He is called The Word of God. God put Jesus

out front so that we could get saved. God's *name* is his character and reputation. God's Word is Jesus.

For You have magnified Your word above all Your name. (Psalm 138:2)

The Holy Spirit is the source of power to live a holy and God-empowered life. It is great that you have received Jesus Christ as your personal LORD and savior; but how can you live up to your calling? How many times do we run into people who are saved by Jesus, but they have stopped growing? It is like comparing an avocado seed to an avocado tree in full production. It's all there; but it is not in use. We can call that dormancy *the unremarkable Christian*. It is like the guy being given all of the tools but never going out to fix anything. The Holy Spirit is also the teacher. We are not meant to just be third-party observers or critics. The Holy Spirit puts a fire in our belly to do good. We won't be happy until we engage our faith.



¹² I assure you and most solemnly say to you, anyone who believes in Me [as Savior] will also do the things that I do; and he will do even greater things than these [in extent and outreach], because I am going to the Father. ¹³ And I will do whatever you ask in My name [as My representative], this I will do, so that the Father may be glorified and celebrated in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask Me anything in My name [as My representative], I will do it. ¹⁵ "If you [really] love Me, you will keep and obey My commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor—Counselor, Strengthen, Standby), to be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive [and take to its heart] because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He (the Holy Spirit) remains with you continually and will be in you. ¹⁸ "I will not leave you as orphans [comfortless, bereaved, and helpless]; I will come [back] to you. ¹⁹ After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. ²⁰ On that day [when that time comes] you will know for yourselves that I am in My Father, and you are in Me,

and I am in you. ²¹ *The person who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who [really] loves Me; and whoever [really] loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and reveal Myself to him [I will make Myself real to him].* ²² *Judas (not Iscariot) asked Him, “Lord, what has happened that You are going to reveal Yourself to us and not to the world?”* ²³ *Jesus answered, “If anyone [really] loves Me, he will keep My word (teaching); and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling place with him.* ²⁴ *One who does not [really] love Me does not keep My words. And the word (teaching) which you hear is not Mine, but is the Father’s who sent Me.* ²⁵ *“I have told you these things while I am still with you. But the Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor—Counselor, Strengtheners, Standby), the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name [in My place, to represent Me and act on My behalf], He will teach you all things. And He will help you remember everything that I have told you.* ²⁷ *Peace I leave with you; My [perfect] peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid. [Let My perfect peace calm you in every circumstance and give you courage and strength for every challenge.]* ²⁸ *You heard Me tell you, ‘I am going away, and I am coming back to you.’ If you [really] loved Me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going [back] to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.* ²⁹ *I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does take place, you may believe and have faith [in Me]. (John 14)*

In other words, Luke records the path of salvation by focusing on Jesus in the gospel of Luke. Now Acts records where that leads to once you enter into God’s heavenly family. We become infused with new virtues as if they were heavenly downloads and updates that turn us to see things differently. How many times have I felt like I was losing; when in fact I was winning in Christ? I was not looking at the right things. The Holy Spirit is like a road map and a GPS service that we all converge into. Christians can sense others that have this added feature just by listening to them talk.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law (Galatians 5)

Is he leading the God head? Not really. Jesus only directs attention to the Father and glorifies him and quotes him. It is fascinating that Jesus never shares his own independent thoughts. Jesus is a 100% volunteer, and yet he was sent. He is all in to promote the Good Father.

49 For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. 50 I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.” (John 12)

Curiously, God does not brag on himself; and yet he has to bring light into dark minds. The Holy Spirit dispatched Jesus through a gauntlet in order to display how to resist temptation. Jesus would probably would not have gone out into the desert to show off his holiness.

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. (Matthew 4:1)

There is a self-effacement dynamic between the members of the God Head. God sent the son to show the people their savior and king. The Son only displayed his gracious father who is the highest of all three. Jesus refuses to take the throne, even though he has the power. God will set him on his throne in his own timing. Jesus has inherited all power from his dad, but he won't take one morsel of the glory until his dad tells him its time, according to the Fathers grand plan. Even the saints belong to the Father. The son is the shepherd of our souls.

After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. 2 For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. 3 Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. 4 I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. 6 “I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. 7 Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. 8 For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. 9 I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. 10 All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. 11 I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. 12 While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled. (John 17)

The Holy Spirit was actually sent by Jesus to earth after his ascension. Does this mean that The Father is the big guy, then Jesus, then the Spirit? The Spirit almost tries to hide, so that we focus on Jesus. Not entirely.

²⁶ “When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. ²⁷ And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning. (John 15)

⁷ But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ about sin, because people do not believe in me; ¹⁰ about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; ¹¹ and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. (John 16)

We also learn that the Father is the source of eternal life; but he has given Jesus the power to distribute it to as many as who would be saved. Jesus really is the agent of God, fully authorized to underwrite anything according to the Father’s will.

²⁶ For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. ²⁷ And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. ²⁸ “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned. ³⁰ By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me. (John 5)

Going to the Source of Life to Sample it For Yourself

Dr. Luke was not a prophet or a priest. In fact, he was not even a Jew. God honors this Gentile author for his effort to get to the bottom of the Son of God by studying first-hand information. God will honor us as well, to the degree that we roll up our sleeves and do some serious digging.

Luke wrote two New Testament books as an ongoing series; for a very exacting and interested and honorable person. He may have even paid Luke to go to the sources. Luke is a very detailed recorder. He interviews eyewitnesses like a police detective might do. He is a physician by trade. The first part, the Gospel of Luke, tells how God fulfilled his plan for the world's salvation through the life, death, and

resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, as the promised messiah. Acts continues the story of Christianity in the 1st century, beginning with the ascension of Jesus to Heaven. Technically the book of Acts never ended. The early chapters, set in Jerusalem, describe the Day of Pentecost (the coming of the Holy Spirit) and the growth of the church in Jerusalem. Initially, the Jews are receptive to the Christian message, but later they turn against the followers of Jesus. Rejected by the Jews, the message is taken to the Gentiles under the guidance of Paul the Apostle. The later chapters tell of Paul's conversion, his mission in Asia Minor and the Aegean, and finally his imprisonment in Rome, where, as the book ends, he awaits trial.

Both books are addressed to Theophilus, the author's patron—and perhaps a label for a Christian community as a whole as the name means "Beloved of God", and the preface of Acts explicitly references "my former book" about the life of Jesus—almost certainly the work we know as the Gospel of Luke.

Read Acts 1:1-8: Luke covered all that Jesus did before his crucifixion, resurrection from the dead and ascension to heaven. There were 40 days of events after his death until his return to heaven that are also included in the Gospel of Luke. Interestingly, it says what Jesus did through the holy Spirit...not what the Holy Spirit did on his own.

⁴⁹ Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." (Luke 20:49)

Jesus has been crucified, and his disciples were told to wait in Jerusalem for what comes next. God may tell us *the next step*, but rarely does walking with the Holy Spirit include any schedule or itinerary. Any time that I have noticed that I am walking with the Holy Spirit, it includes a lot of *unexpected changes*. It almost seems to be on purpose, to remind me who is driving. God uses *course corrections* that we had not intended. It can be frustrating if you try to exert too much control with God. He might not meet your scheduling demands. Giving up the steering wheel is a big part of the role of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus prepares his followers with the knowledge that they will be baptized with the Holy Spirit in the near future. What does that even mean? It is an over-washing feeling that something friendly and powerful has just filled and enveloped you. It is an added depth of satisfaction with simple things that God has given you. It includes a confidence in the unknown places where God is taking you.

The disciples were trying to get ahead of Jesus by getting a peak at the longer-term plans of God. Jesus pointed out that there is a good reason not to know ahead of time. The Holy Spirit has a lot to do with faith development and becoming more at ease with less control.

Read Acts 1:9-14: The angels on hand at Jesus ascension to heaven told the bystanders that Jesus would return in the same place in the same way.

Then the LORD will go forth And fight against those nations, As He fights in the day of battle. ⁴ And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, From east to west, Making a very large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north And half of it toward the south. ⁵ Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, For the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee As you fled from the earthquake In the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the LORD my God will come, And all the saints with You. (Zechariah 14)

Read Acts 1:15-26:

They wanted to replace the Apostle Judas, who committed suicide. He was a thief, and he sold out Jesus. The field Judas was buried in had its origins in Jeremiah's days. This *potter's field* was where broken pottery was thrown. It was like a local dump. In fact it became known as the Valley of Hinnom; which was symbolic of hell. This became the place where idolatry became so vile that they burned babies here and beat the drums to cover the screams. This local dump symbolized hell because of the burning carcasses and trash, dead animals, debris and waste and smoke. It was fitting that Judas was buried in this replica of hell.

The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar..... ⁷ 'Behold, Hanamel the son of Shallum your uncle will come to you, saying, "Buy my field which is in Anathoth, for the right of redemption is yours to buy it." ' ⁸ Then Hanamel my uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the LORD, and said to me, 'Please buy my field that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin; for the right of inheritance is yours, and the redemption yours; buy it for yourself.' Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD. ⁹ So I bought the field from Hanamel, the son of my uncle who was in Anathoth, and weighed out to him the money—seventeen shekels of silver..... ²⁵ And You have said to me, O Lord GOD, "Buy the field for money, and take witnesses"!—yet the city has been given into the hand of the Chaldeans.' " ²⁶ Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, ²⁷ "Behold, I am

the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me? ²⁸ Therefore thus says the LORD: 'Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take it. ²⁹ And the Chaldeans who fight against this city shall come and set fire to this city and burn it, with the houses on whose roofs they have offered incense to Baal and poured out drink offerings to other gods, to provoke Me to anger; ³⁰ because the children of Israel and the children of Judah have done only evil before Me from their youth. For the children of Israel have provoked Me only to anger with the work of their hands,' says the LORD. ³¹ 'For this city has been to Me a provocation of My anger and My fury from the day that they built it, even to this day; so I will remove it from before My face ³² because of all the evil of the children of Israel and the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke Me to anger—they, their kings, their princes, their priests, their prophets, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ³³ And they have turned to Me the back, and not the face; though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not listened to receive instruction. ³⁴ But they set their abominations in ^[e]the house which is called by My name, to defile it. ³⁵ And they built the high places of Baal which are in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Molech, which I did not command them, nor did it come into My mind that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.' ³⁶ "Now therefore, thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city of which you say, 'It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: ³⁷ Behold, I will gather them out of all countries where I have driven them in My anger, in My fury, and in great wrath; I will bring them back to this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely. (Jeremiah 32)

This ancient, cursed ground is where they spent Judas's betrayal money. Thirty pieces of silver was the value of a slave. Jesus was valued as if he was just a slave by those who did not love him.

³ Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, ⁴ saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." And they said, "What is that to us? You see to it!" ⁵ Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself. ⁶ But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood." ⁷ And they consulted together and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. ⁸ Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. ⁹ Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, ¹⁰ and gave them for the potter's field, as the LORD directed me." (Matthew 27)

Judas was replaced by Mattias.