

Lesson 3 The Author of Acts

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# Acts Intro



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# Table of Contents

What do you know?	— 03
Who is the Author?	— 05
Luke as the Author	— 06
Luke and Paul	— 07
Importance of Details	— 08
Intros & Credits	— 09
Copyright and Biblio	— 10

preparation

# What do you know?

When I homeschooled my children, one of their history books would ask questions before teaching the lesson. This exercise helped both the student and the teacher gauge with what the student already knew, what they needed to learn, and what information needed to be corrected. Admittedly, I would have despised this exercise because I don't like being tested on something until I have the chance to learn it. Why? Well, because if I'm honest I like to be right. I like to know the answers. And, when people ask me questions about God, I feel like a "bad" Christian if I don't know the answers. But, if I look down deep enough, the real reason I don't like this process is that I'm prideful. So, before we start this lesson, we're going to battle our pride together by asking questions to determine what we know, what we need to learn, and then after our study, we may even discover that our answers need to be corrected. So, without further ado, let's get started.

01. Who authored the book of Acts? Did he write any other books? Which one/ones?

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02. What was the author's purpose behind writing Acts? List some scriptures or phrases which evidence Luke's purpose? (Hint: the answer to this may be contained in the homework from the last lesson.)

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continued...

# What do you know?

03. Who is the audience? Who is the author writing to and how do you know?

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04. Are there any stories you know which come from Acts? List them now.

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05. Are there any main ideas/theologies that you have been taught by preachers/sermons have from Acts? List these.

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# 3 Acts 1 Lesson 3

## Who is the Author?



### How are you wired?

Do you prefer black and white distinctions or room for some mystery? In the past, I preferred concrete Bible answers because the unknown made me uncomfortable. I assumed that unresolved questions and open-ended answers would cause me to doubt, and doubt would damage my faith and my relationship with God. However, as time passes and I grow older, I have come to realize that the more I learn about God, the more I realize how much I do not know. This is also a tendency I have seen in my mentors, for very often they profess the same deficiency in their

searching after God; that the more they learn, the more they realize how much they do not know.

The reason for this is that “God is both immanent and transcendent. God is present and active within his creation, but superior to and independent of everything he has created” (Erickson, 79). Isaiah 55:8-9 says, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts (ESV).” At one point I felt

## How are you wired? continued . . .

as if God’s incomprehensibility created a chasm between us. However, I have learned that I do not have to perceive God’s greatness as a separation, but rather something which furnishes me comfort and safety. I share this with you because sometimes the Bible contains elements which remain unknown; mysteries which we may discover one day or which may remain hidden until Jesus returns. One of these “unknowns” is the absolute identity of the author of Acts.



## Why is Luke Identified as the Author?

In last week’s lesson, I asked you to study Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-3 and to try to identify the author, audience, and purpose of the books. Did you notice that neither book identified the author’s name as Luke? But, the harmony of the introductions point to identical authorship. Most Bible scholars will tell you that the absence of a name means we cannot know his name for certain.

Even so, in his book, *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, Darrell L. Bock offers this insight: “Despite the wide selection of potential candidates available as companions of Paul, the tradition of the church gives attention to only one name as the author of these volumes- Luke. This tradition was firmly fixed in the early church by c. AD 200 and remained so without any hint of contrary opinion. The earliest manuscript of Luke’s gospel that we have is the Bodmer papyri XIV from about c. AD 200, which has a title pointing to Luke as author at its conclusion. This text is more widely known as p75. A title calling the second volume the Acts of the Apostles appears at the end of the transcribing of the book in p74, but no author is named there. Luke is named as author of Acts in later manuscripts of 33 (9th century), 189 (14th century), 1891 (10th century), and 2344 (11th century). The absence of any dispute about the claim of authorship across several early centuries is a strong reason to take the tradition seriously” (32).



## How do we know Luke is the author? continued . . .

One of the reasons I quote Bock is because he conducted his “doctoral dissertation at the University of Aberdeen” and studied “the use of the Old Testament for Christology in Luke-Acts” (21). He has also “written commentaries at various levels for Luke and a commentary on Acts” (21). After all of this work in and on Luke-Acts, Bock provides the above evidence that Luke is the author of Luke-Acts. In addition, in the sidebar, I will list a variety of traditional church fathers who are in agreement.

**Sources which  
reference  
Luke's authorship  
(sometimes on  
multiple occasions)**

1 & 2 Clement  
Justin Martyr  
Muratorian Canon  
Irenaeus  
Tertillian  
Eusebius

*“The absence of any dispute about the claim of authorship across several early centuries is a strong reason to take the tradition seriously”*

*-Darrell L. Bock*

## The Luke and Paul Connection

Early church traditions and church fathers who lived either during or shortly after the circulation of the gospels, Paul's letters, and Acts maintained that Luke was the author and connected him to Paul. "Ever since the second century CE the author has been traditionally identified with the Luke mentioned in Colossians 4:14 as 'Luke the beloved physician.' The attribution of the twofold work to such an obscure New Testament character has been thought to speak for the genuineness of the tradition" (Metzger, 183). In addition, scholars who attribute authorship to Luke point to the multiple uses of personal pronouns such as "I, we, they, and them" in his narrative (Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-12; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16). These references indicate that the author was present with Paul in some capacity when these events took place. Colossians 4:14, 2 Timothy 4:11 and Philemon 24 connect a person named Luke who was associated with Paul, and Col. 4:11 specifies that Luke is a physician. Church tradition combined with these references has led a majority of scholars to identify Luke as the author.

## The Importance of Details

When I was growing up, I innocently accepted that the Bible was the legitimate Word of God. I do not say this to brag or boast, but to illuminate the fact that I did not doubt this ancient document, compiled over centuries and written by men, represented the very words of God. However, now that I am an adult who has been in ministry since 1996, many people have asked me questions I had not considered. Therefore, I want to provide you with some concrete answers instead of expecting you to take my word for it. And, while I do believe church tradition provides us with ample proof of Luke's authorship, I am more excited to get to know more about the author himself through a careful examination of his own words, for in them we will discover the passion behind Luke's message, his purpose for writing, and his theology.



# Credits



Caylee Collins  
Editor and Creator

Caylee has been a huge help in helping me gather, consolidate, brainstorm and create this study.



Joseph Pope  
Podcast Producer

Joseph records and uploads the podcasts for this study and deserved a big mention.



The King Family: Joseph,  
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The King family lives in Anderson, SC.



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The photos in this lesson are by Sixteen Miles Out on Unsplash



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## Bibliography

Bock, Darrell L. *A Theology of Luke and Acts: Biblical Theology of the New Testament*. Edited by Andreas J. Kostenberger. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012.

Metzger Bruce M., and Michael D. Coogan. 2001. *The Oxford Guide to People & Places of the Bible*. Oxford, N.Y.: Oxford University Press. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=e025xna&AN=690188&site=ehost-live>.

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