

On the Authorship of Luke and Acts

The notion that the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles were composed by the same author as a combined volume is a common belief among NT scholars. The objective of this chapter is to present evidence that Luke 3-24 and Acts were written several decades apart, likely by two different authors, and Luke 1-2 was added as an interpolation by the author of Acts.



Among the most widely accepted tenets of NT scholarship is that the author of the *Gospel of Luke* also wrote *Acts of the Apostles*. For many, this is a matter of settled scholarship. The pervasive use of the combined title “Luke–Acts” in the academy serves to propagate and reinforce what is regarded as a well-established recognition of common authorship. And indeed, the author of the *Gospel of Luke* opens with a salutation to the “most excellent Theophilus” along with a description of circumstances leading to the compilation of the gospel, while the book of *Acts* opens with a similar greeting to Theophilus and a declaration that the book is now to be continued. In addition, both Luke and Acts are written in refined Greek and they share a good amount of distinctive grammar in common. The first chapter of Acts is written with the obvious intent to integrate Acts with the *Gospel of Luke*, and many features of Acts are quite in harmony with materials in Luke. Even the subtle elevation of the apostle John to second rank above James that appears in Luke 8.51, 9.28, and 22.8 is echoed by the same ranking in the list of disciples in Acts 1.13. There would seem to be no reason to doubt that the *Gospel of Luke* and the *Acts of the Apostles* were written as a combined work by the same author, possibly at the same time or at least in a similar timeframe.

Thus, one would want to proceed with an abundance of caution in daring to suggest that the “Luke–Acts” emperor may have no clothes—that the author of the original *Gospel of Luke* did not write *Acts*. Nevertheless, in this chapter I will present data which point rather insistently toward this

conclusion. When one examines Luke and Acts with a skeptical eye, free from the tyranny of academic convention, there is an increasing sense that all is not as it appears to be. One begins to wonder whether the notion of the common authorship of the “combined volume” of Luke and Acts may at best be misleading, if not outright erroneous. For the data to be presented here are most easily resolved by assuming that the *Gospel of Luke*, excepting the first two chapters, and *Acts of the Apostles* were composed decades apart. The grammatical data indicate that Luke 1-2 and Acts were indeed composed by the same author. Though this could have been the same author who wrote Luke 3-24 writing several decades later, the data give us ample reason to suspect that these were two different authors.

Did Luke originally begin at 3.1?

It has long been suspected by some observers that the original *Gospel of Luke* might have commenced at 3.1. B.H. Streeter noted this in 1924:

Luke 3.1 opens with an elaborate chronological statement: “In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberias, when Pontius Pilate was ... the word of the Lord came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.” ***This surely reads as if it was originally written as the opening of a book.*** The impression is strengthened by the curious position of the genealogy of our Lord (3.23). If this had been inserted by the last editor of the Gospel, we should have expected to find it, like the genealogy in Matthew, somewhere in chapters 1 or 2 in connection with the account of the Birth and Infancy. If, however, it was originally inserted in a book which only began with Luke 3.1, its position is explained – for it occurs immediately after the first mention of the name Jesus.¹ (emphasis added)

Bart Ehrman follows a similar line of reasoning in proposing that the preface in Luke 1.1–4 was followed immediately by 3.1, and that the infancy narratives were subsequent interpolations. His logic for this, which is largely in harmony with Streeter, is presented on his blog as follows:

- The beginning of ch. 3 reads like the *beginning* of a narrative, not the continuation of a narrative.
- The beginning of ch. 3 is the same, in substance, as the beginning of the source of Luke’s Gospel, Mark (they both begin with Jesus being baptized).

¹ Streeter, B. H., *The Four Gospels*, 1924, p. 209

- Some of the central themes of chs. 1–2 are never referred to elsewhere in either the rest of the Gospel or the book of Acts (e.g., Jesus having come from Bethlehem; his mother being a virgin), even though lots of other themes from early chapters (e.g, the baptism by John) *are* referred to later.
- The voice at the baptism (“today I have begotten you” as “my son”) does not seem to make sense given the narrative of chs. 1–2 (where, according to 1.35, Jesus is the son of God because God made his mother pregnant)
- The genealogy that is given in ch. 3 doesn’t make sense if the Gospel already had chs. 1–2. The genealogy is given *after* the baptism. But the natural place for a genealogy is at the point in which a person is *born* (since the genealogy traces the bloodline up to the time of birth), not at the point of baptism (as a 30 year old!). Without chs. 1–2, however, the genealogy makes sense at the baptism, since it is at the baptism that Jesus is made the son of God according to the voice from heaven, and so immediately afterward the genealogy is given, in which Jesus’ family line is traced not only to Adam (so that he is the son of Adam) but from Adam to God (so that he is the son of God).²

The one notable difference between Streeter and Ehrman is in their interpretation of the preface. Streeter’s speculation envisions that an original edition of the *Gospel of Luke* commenced at 3.1, while Ehrman assumes that the preface 1.1–4 was original and immediately followed by 3.1. Thus, for Ehrman the interpolated material is isolated to just Luke 1.5–2.52. My initial impression was that Ehrman was most likely right, for it is indeed difficult to imagine that the author of Acts would have disingenuously fabricated the two hails to Theophilus in order to associate Acts with Luke. However, for reasons itemized below it now appears to me that 1.1–4 was an integral part of the interpolation, and that Luke 1–2 in its entirety was added to Luke 3–24 by the author of Acts, in concert with the production of Acts. For there are unique grammatical parallels between Luke 1.1–4 and Acts that are difficult to explain under any other scenario.

Luke 1–2 as Late Interpolation

Once one reads the *Gospel of Luke* considering the possibility that it originally commenced at 3.1, the gospel’s interpretation of Mary suddenly appears quite discontinuous. In Luke 1–2, Mary is venerated as the young virgin whom the angel Gabriel visits, who is chosen by God and gives

² <https://chrmanblog.org/did-luke-originally-have-chapters-1-2/>, Aug 15, 2013

miraculous birth to the Lord, and who fulfills her role as the divinely chosen mother of the Lord with dignity, grace, and submission to God. Mary's name appears twelve times in Luke 1–2, which may not be a coincidence. Whether the twelve uses of Mary was intentionally symbolic or not, there is no question that Luke 1–2 is unparalleled as the most reverential interpretation of Mary in the NT.

It is therefore striking that Mary virtually disappears in Luke 3–24. There are no further references to Mary by name throughout the rest of the gospel. She is mentioned as the mother of Jesus twice in Luke 3–24, but on neither occasion by name. And in both cases she is dismissed with remarkable indifference. In the first instance, Jesus abruptly dismisses his mother as irrelevant:

8.19 Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him for the crowd. 20 And he was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you." 21 But he said to them, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it."

This conversation is recorded in Mark and Matthew as well, but in these gospels the wording is not nearly as harsh. Jesus says that all who hear the word of God are part of his extended family, but there is no implication that his mother and brothers may not be among those who hear the word of God as one might infer from the language in Luke. This same lack of respect for Jesus' mother appears again in Luke 11, with an even more derisive hint that she may not be among those who hear the word of God and keep it:

11.27 As he said this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!" 28 But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

Thus, the author of Luke 3–24 writes as if he does not recognize Mary as a uniquely honored or venerated soul; he does not seem to be aware of the exalted interpretation of Mary in Luke 1–2, which of course would be the case if Luke 1–2 was a later addition to the gospel.

Further Discontinuities between Luke 1–2 and 3–24

The discordant interpretation of Mary in Luke 1–2 as compared to Luke 3–24 is not the only ideological disparity between these two texts.

Another glaring discontinuity is their differing outlooks on Israel and the traditions of the fathers. Luke 1–2 features several comments that reveal the author’s abiding respect for the “fathers” and the tradition of God’s history with Israel:

1.32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him **the throne of his father David**, 33 and he will **reign over the house of Jacob** forever;

1.54 **He has helped his servant Israel**, in remembrance of his mercy, 55 **as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity forever.**"

1.68 "Blessed be the **Lord God of Israel**, for he has visited and redeemed his people, 69 and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in **the house of his servant David**, 70 as he spoke by the mouth of his **holy prophets from of old**, 71 that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us; 72 to perform the mercy **promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant**, 73 **the oath which he swore to our father Abraham**

2.29 "Lord, now let thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; 30 for mine eyes have seen thy salvation 31 which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles, **and for glory to thy people Israel.**"

Thus, for the author of Luke 1–2, the coming of the Savior is a resounding fulfillment of the hope and destiny of Israel. Conversely, the author of Luke 3–24 has no such respect for the traditions of the fathers or for the coming of Jesus as a fulfillment of the hopes and destiny of Israel. In Luke’s genealogy, Abraham and David are buried deep in the list and appear to be largely irrelevant in the lineage of Jesus. The author of Luke 3–24 also offers these:

Luke 3.7 "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruits that befit repentance, and **do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father'**; for I tell you, **God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.**

Luke 13.27 But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from; depart from me, all you workers of iniquity!' 28 There you will weep and gnash your teeth, **when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves thrust out.** 29 And men will come from east and west, and from north and south, and sit at table in the kingdom of God.

Luke 20.37 But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, **where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. 38 Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living;** for all live to him."

The author of Luke deems it necessary to illustrate that the Messiah's descent from David is irrelevant:

Luke 20.41 But he said to them, "How can they say that the Christ is David's son? 42 For David himself says in the Book of Psalms, 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, 43 till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet.' 44 David thus calls him Lord; so how is he his son?"

Despite Luke 3–24's general disregard for the relevance of Abraham and David, the author holds the Hebrew scriptures in high esteem as prophetic evidence pointing to Jesus as the Christ:

4.16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day. And he stood up to read; 17 **and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah.** He opened the book and found the place where it was written, 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, 19 to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." 20 And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21 And he began to say to them, **"Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."**

24.25 And he said to them, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, **he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.**

24.31 And their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished out of their sight. 32 They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while **he opened to us the scriptures?**"

24.44 Then he said to them, "These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that **everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.**"

Luke's Gospel does include one positive reference to Abraham in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (16.19–31), but it is incidental to the parable's primary meaning. The poor, destitute Lazarus is carried to the bosom of Abraham while the rich man is condemned. The rich man asks that Lazarus return from the dead to warn his family of pending condemnation. Abraham denies the request on the grounds that they already have Moses and the prophets, and if people do not listen to them, seeing someone raised from the dead will not convince them. So this parable affirms the relevance of the law and the prophets as guides to enlightenment, while dismissing as irrelevant the proposed appearance of a resurrected Lazarus.³

Though there is a palpable discontinuity between Luke 1–2 and 3–24 in their respective views of the “God of the fathers of Israel,” Acts is in close harmony with Luke 1–2 in this regard:

Acts 3.12 And when Peter saw it he addressed the people, "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk? 13 **The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers**, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate...

Acts 3.25 You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which **God gave to your fathers, saying to Abraham**, 'And in your posterity shall all the families of the earth be blessed.'

Acts 5.29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. 30 **The God of our fathers** raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a tree.

Acts 7.7 'But I will judge the nation which they serve,' said God, 'and after that they shall come out and worship me in this place.' 8 And **he gave him the covenant of circumcision**. And so **Abraham** became the father of **Isaac**, and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac became the father of **Jacob**, and **Jacob of the twelve patriarchs**.

Acts 7.31 When Moses saw it he wondered at the sight; and as he drew near to look, the voice of the Lord came, 32 **'I am the God of your fathers, the**

³ The author of Luke knew Ur-John. This parable in Luke was developed to refute the representations in Ur-John that people were believing in Jesus *because* they had seen the resurrected Lazarus. Luke knows his readers will never see such a thing, so he offers this parable to argue that seeing someone resurrected is not relevant to belief. This parable is evidence that the author of Luke was aware of Ur-John and bothered by the implications of its Lazarus material.

God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.' And Moses trembled and did not dare to look.

Acts 13.32 And we bring you the good news that what **God promised to the fathers**, 33 this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus

Acts 22.12 "And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, 13 came to me, and standing by me said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And in that very hour I received my sight and saw him. 14 And he said, '**The God of our fathers** appointed you to know his will,

Acts 24.14 But this I admit to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship **the God of our fathers**, believing everything laid down by the law or written in the prophets

Acts 26.6 And now I stand here on trial for hope in **the promise made by God to our fathers**, 7 to which our twelve tribes hope to attain

Therefore, while Acts parallels Luke 1–2 in reverence for the fathers and the God of Israel, there is a striking disconnect between Acts and Luke 3–24, since the honoring of “the God of our fathers” and the Abrahamic covenant is substantially muted in Luke 3–24. In this respect it appears that Luke 1–2 and Acts come from similar traditions whereas Luke 3–24 is written under different circumstances by an author with a manifest disregard for the traditions of Israel.

Related to the reverence for the fathers in Acts is the attention given to Israel itself. Israel or Israelites are mentioned 20 times in Acts, seven times in Luke 1–2, but only five times in Luke 3–24. Moreover, the five references to Israel in Luke 3–24 appear in marginally relevant or negative contexts:

Luke 4.25 But in truth, I tell you, **there were many widows in Israel** in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there came a great famine over all the land;

Luke 4.27 And **there were many lepers in Israel** in the time of the prophet Elisha; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."

Luke 7.9 When Jesus heard this he marveled at him, and turned and said to the multitude that followed him, "I tell you, **not even in Israel have I found such faith.**"

Luke 22.29 and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, 30 that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and **sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**

Luke 24.19 And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20 and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death and crucified him. 21 **But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.**

The tepid, rather indifferent treatment of Israel in Luke 3–24 stands in contrast with the sympathetic and even enthusiastic perspectives on Israel found in Luke 1–2 and Acts:

Luke 1.16 **And he will turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God**

Luke 1.54 **He has helped his servant Israel**, in remembrance of his mercy, 55 as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity forever.

Luke 1.68 **"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel**, for he has visited and redeemed his people, 69 and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David

Luke 2.29 "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; 30 for mine eyes have seen thy salvation 31 which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles, **and for glory to thy people Israel.**"

Acts 5.30 The God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. 31 God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, **to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.**

Acts 9.15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings **and the sons of Israel;**

Acts 10.34 And Peter ... said: "Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, 35 but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. 36 **You know the word which he sent to Israel**, preaching good news of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), 37 the word which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism which John preached

Acts 13.17 The **God of this people Israel** chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he

led them out of it. 18 And for about forty years he bore with them in the wilderness. 19 And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance, for about four hundred and fifty years. 20 And after that he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. 21 Then they asked for a king; and God gave them Saul ... for forty years. 22 And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king; of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.' 23 Of this man's posterity **God has brought to Israel a Savior**, Jesus, as he promised. 24 Before his coming John had preached a baptism of repentance **to all the people of Israel**.

The phrase “men of Israel” (*andres Israelitai*) occurs seven times in Acts and is unique to Acts in the NT. In addition, Acts contains five references to the “sons of Israel,” four to the “people of Israel,” and two to the “house of Israel.” Similarly, Luke 1–2 contains one reference each to the “sons of Israel” (1.16) and “the people of Israel” (2.32) so again there is grammatical synchrony between Luke 1–2 and Acts on this element. Conversely, none of these phrases occur even once in Luke 3–24, which is almost half of the “Luke-Acts” corpus.

In short, for the author of Luke 1–2 and Acts, Israel is foundational and essential to the redemption story. Though God is to extend salvation to the Gentiles, he does so through his redemption of Israel and the fulfillment of promises made to Israel. In contrast, for the author of Luke 3–24, Israel is largely irrelevant and only infrequently worthy of mention at all. This momentous shift in perspective requires an explanation.

The Second Coming

Another striking disparity between Luke and Acts is Luke’s pressing concern with eschatological issues, and the absence of such in Acts. Roughly 12% of the text of Luke 3–24 addresses expectations of an imminent second coming as well as issues related to its perceived delay. The Parousia is expected at any time, but its delay has become a matter of concern. In apparent historical context, at the time Luke 3–24 was written (perhaps 75–80 CE), the first Jewish-Roman war has occurred, Jerusalem and the temple have been destroyed, yet Jesus has not returned in victorious retribution. How is Jesus’ failure to return under these dire circumstances to be explained? The author of Luke 3–24 issues warnings to the faithful to remain steadfast despite the evident delay:

Luke 12.35-48 "Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning, 36 and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the marriage feast, so that they may open to him at once when he comes and knocks. 37 **Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes;** truly, I say to you, he will gird himself and have them sit at table, and he will come and serve them. 38 If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those servants! 39 But know this, that if the householder had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. 40 You also must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an unexpected hour." 41 Peter said, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?" 42 And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? 43 Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing. 44 Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. 45 **But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink and get drunk,** 46 the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will punish him, and put him with the unfaithful. 47 And that servant who knew his master's will, but did not make ready or act according to his will, shall receive a severe beating. 48 But he who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, shall receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much is given, of him will much be required; and of him to whom men commit much they will demand the more.

Luke 18.1-8 And he told them a parable, to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. 2 He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor regarded man; 3 and there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Vindicate me against my adversary.' 4 For a while he refused; but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor regard man, 5 yet because this widow bothers me, I will vindicate her, or she will wear me out by her continual coming.'" 6 And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. 7 **And will not God vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? 8 I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?"**

Luke 21.29-36 And he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees; 30 as soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. 31 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. 32 Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away till all has taken place. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. 34 **"But take heed to yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a snare;** 35 for it will come upon all who dwell upon the face of the whole earth. 36 But watch at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of man."

What is most alarming is that the author of Luke's pressing concern for the faithful to remain steadfast in anticipation of the Lord's return effectively disappears in the book of Acts. For in Acts there is no discussion of an

imminent second coming that could come like a snare at any moment, and no hint of concern for its evident delay. Acts is simply not in any sense an eschatological book in the same vein as Luke 3–24. In practical terms, the issue appears to have been forgotten by the time Acts was written.

If the authors of Luke 3–24 and Acts were the same individual, the significant change in his eschatological outlook suggests at least a time lapse between the composition of Luke and Acts. For it seems likely that some period of time would have been required for the author to have abandoned his concern for the pending Parousia, and to ignore it as an issue of immediate concern in the writing of Acts. If these were two different authors, they simply had two different sets of eschatological expectations. It appears as if the author of Acts assumes that his readers have long ago lost their concern for the delay of the Parousia, for he shows no interest in addressing it.

The Pharisees

Yet another intriguing disparity between Luke and Acts is their divergent views on the Pharisees. The author of Luke 3–24 characterizes them overwhelmingly as hypocritical adversaries of Jesus, the primary antagonists who oppose and challenge him:

5.21 And the scribes and **the Pharisees began to question**, saying, "Who is this that speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?"

5.30 And the **Pharisees and their scribes murmured against his disciples**, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

6.2 But some of **the Pharisees said**, "**Why are you doing what is not lawful** to do on the sabbath?"

6.7 And the scribes **and the Pharisees watched him, to see whether he would heal on the sabbath, so that they might find an accusation against him ...**

6.11 **But [the Pharisees] were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.**

11.39 And the Lord said to him, "**Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of extortion and wickedness.** 40 **You fools!**

11.42 **"But woe to you Pharisees!** for you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God;

11.43 **Woe to you Pharisees!** for you love the best seat in the synagogues and salutations in the market places.

11.53 As he went away from there, the scribes and **the Pharisees began to press him hard**, and to provoke him to speak of many things, 54 **lying in wait for him**, to catch at something he might say.

12.1b **"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."**

16.13 You cannot serve God and mammon." 14 **The Pharisees, who were lovers of money**, heard all this, and they scoffed at him.

18.10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 **The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank thee that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.** 12 I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.' 13 But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

In contrast to the above, there is one verse in Luke wherein some good hearted Pharisees warn Jesus to flee as Herod is out to kill him (13.31). Yet this is a glaring anomaly, for in every other respect the Pharisees are condemned as hypocritical, immoral, self-serving adversaries with whom Jesus routinely spars to their disadvantage. It is therefore striking that the author of Acts suddenly portrays the Pharisees as rational, admired, cautious in their judgments, and respectful of the apostles. In one instance he refers to some Pharisees as believers:

5.34 But **a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, held in honor by all the people**, stood up and ordered the men to be put outside for a while. 35 And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you do with these men.

15.4 When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them. 5 But **some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees** rose up, and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses."

23.6 But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, **"Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees;** with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead I am on trial." 7 And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. 8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. 9 Then a great clamor arose; and **some of the scribes of the Pharisees' party stood up and contended, "We find nothing wrong in this man.** What if a spirit or an angel spoke to him?"

Here, then, is another discontinuity in perspective between Luke and Acts. The Pharisees who are duplicitous adversaries worthy of no respect in Luke become rational defenders of the apostles in Acts. If this was the same author, what motivated this change in perspective?

Collectively, these interpretive contradictions are not what one would expect from a single author writing the entire "Luke–Acts" corpus as one volume. B.H. Streeter's observation comes to mind—Luke 3.1 looks more than ever like the original beginning of the gospel when one brings these contradictions into focus. Are there further incompatibilities between Luke 1–2 and 3–24, or between Luke 3–24 and Acts, that would continue to erode confidence in the belief that "Luke–Acts" was the work of a single author? Indeed, another half-dozen examples can be found.

Luke 1–2 vs. Luke 3–24

Given that Luke 3.1 appears as if it could have been the original beginning of the gospel, when chs. 1–2 and 3–24 are compared as discrete texts, numerous other oddities come to light. Among them are these:

1. Nazareth. There is a peculiar reference to Nazareth in Luke 4.16:

4.14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and a report concerning him went out through all the surrounding country. 15 And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. 16 **And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up;** and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day.

The puzzle here is two-fold. There has just been extensive discussion in Luke 2 of the circumstances under which Jesus came to be born in Bethlehem but raised in Nazareth. It seems unusual that the author in

4.16 would feel the need to remind readers again so soon that Jesus had been raised in Nazareth. But also striking is the fact that Nazareth is spelled differently in 4.16. There are four occurrences of Nazareth in the first two chapters of Luke (1.26, 2.4, 39, 51) and in all four instances it is spelled Ναζαρέθ (Nazareth). However, in 4.16 it is spelled Ναζαρά (Nazara). Why would an author who had just used “Nazareth” four times in Luke 1–2 change the spelling to “Nazara” in 4.16? A potential resolution of these anomalies becomes apparent if Luke 1–2 was a later interpolation.

The town of Nazareth is mentioned once in Acts (10.38). It is spelled Ναζαρέθ (Nazareth), as it is in Luke 1–2. This is one of many grammatical agreements between Luke 1–2 and Acts that are absent from Luke 3–24.

2. Savior. Another rare feature in Luke 1–2 is the identification of Jesus as Savior (soter) in 2.11. God is also referred to as Savior (soteri) in 1.47. Yet there is no use of Savior as a formal title for either God or Jesus in Luke 3–24. One would anticipate that an author using such a precise and exalted descriptor in 2.11 would have found an occasion to repeat it elsewhere in the gospel.

Not insignificantly, a parallel with Acts is present with this term as well—Jesus is explicitly declared to be “Savior” in Acts 5.31 and 13.23. So the use of Savior in Luke 2.11 is another instance of grammar used in Luke 1–2 and Acts, but not in chs. 3–24.

3. Grace of God. The word *charis* is found in Luke 2.40 in reference to Jesus growing in strength and “the *grace* of God was upon him.” Oddly enough, the concept of the grace of God is absent in Luke 3–24. The word *charis* occurs only three times in Luke 3–24, in a triplet at Luke 6.32–34, but it is not related to the grace of God:

Luke 6.32 "If you love those who love you, what **credit (charis)** is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what **credit (charis)** is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what **credit (charis)** is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

This use of the term *charis* in Luke 6 stands in contrast with its use in Acts in which the *grace of God* is a prominent theme mentioned either explicitly or implicitly a dozen times. In this regard, Acts echoes Paul, who frequently refers to the grace of God, and who opens Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, and Galatians with “Grace (*charis*) to you and peace from God the Father...” Therefore, it is remarkable that Luke 3–24 does not include any references to the grace of God. But odder still is the fact that in Luke 6.32–34 *charis* has an entirely different meaning than it does in Luke 2, Acts, or Paul. The author does not seem to be aware that *charis* is related to the grace of God as he never uses it in this context. The phrase *charis Theou* (grace of God) that is used in Luke 2.40 appears also four times in Acts 11.23, 13.43, 14.26, and 20.24, but not once in Luke 3–24. So unique grammatical parallels between Luke 1–2 and Acts continue to manifest themselves.

4. Christ. Luke 2.11 declares that “to you is born a Savior *who is Christ the Lord*.” This is the only explicit use of *Christ* as a proper name in the *Gospel of Luke*. Conversely, nine of the ten occurrences of *Christ* in Luke 3–24 are preceded by a definite article (e.g., Jesus asks, “Who do you say that I am?” Peter responds, “***the Christ*** of God” (9.22)). Here, as is typical throughout Luke 3–24, the term *Christ* denotes the messianic role that Jesus has assumed rather than a proper name. The one use of *Christ* in 3–24 without the preceding definite article is this:

23.2 And they began to accuse him, saying, “We found this man perverting our nation, and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is **Christ a king**.”

Here the accusers claim that Jesus has referred to himself as *Christ a king*. One could argue that in this instance the author is said to have adopted *Christ* as his name. However, the meaning is inconclusive. Since this is the only instance of *Christ* appearing without the preceding article in Luke 3–24, the context suggests that the author does not imagine that Jesus has suddenly appropriated *Christ* as a name but rather a role. Yet one may argue that it is open to question. What is not open to question is the fact that this is not an explicit use of *Christ* as a proper name, and that there is no explicit use of *Christ* as a proper name in Luke 3–24.

Conversely, in Acts, *Jesus Christ* is routinely used as an established formal name (2.38, 3.6, 4.10, 8.12, 9.34, 10.36, 10.48, 11.17, 15.26, 16.18, 20.21, 24.24, 28.31). This formulaic name occurs thirteen times in Acts but not once in Luke. Thus, “*Christ the Lord*” in Luke 2.11 parallels usage in Acts but not Luke 3–24.

5. The Word. In the opening address to Theophilus in Luke 1.1–4, the author refers to “*ministers (servants) of the word*.” The use of the phrase *the word* without a prior referent indicates that, for this author, the phrase is a common idiomatic expression for the kerygma being preached by the movement. This usage in Luke 1.2 is consistent with eleven uses of *the word* in Acts (4.4, 6.4, 8.4, 10.36,37,44, 11.19, 14.25, 15.7, 16.6, 17.11). However, the author of Luke 3–24 does not use the phrase *the word* as an idiomatic construct, as if it is understood and accepted vernacular. It only occurs in one passage in which Jesus is explaining the Parable of the Sower:

Luke 8.11 Now the parable is this: **The seed is the word of God.** 12 The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away **the word** from their hearts, that they may not believe and be saved. 13 And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear **the word**, receive it with joy; but these have no root, they believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. 14 And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. 15 And as for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing **the word**, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience.

In this passage the author uses *the word* in immediate reference to “the word of God” in 8.11, so its meaning is explained in context, as if for the first time. It is not an established idiom. Unlike the usage in Luke 1.2, the author of 8.11–15 assumes no prior familiarity with the phrase on the reader’s part. Other than in this one pericope, *the word* is not used anywhere else in Luke 3–24. So its frequent usage in Acts and its absence from Luke 3–24 suggests that Acts was composed at a time when *the word* had become a common figure of speech within the church, whereas when Luke 3–24 was written it was not. The use of this phrase in Luke 1.2 is again in concert with usage in Acts, but not Luke 3–24.

6. Most excellent. In Luke 1.1–4 the author hails the “most excellent” Theophilus. The Greek term used here, *kratiste*, is rare, appearing only four times in the NT. In addition to its use in Luke 1.3, it appears three times in Acts (23.26 and 24.2, in reference to Felix, and 26.25 in reference to Festus). The fact that a rare term used three times in Acts also appears in Luke 1.3 contributes further to the impression of common authorship between Luke 1.3 and Acts.

7. Devout (*eulabēs*, *eusebē*, *sebomenē*). The rare term *eulabēs* (devout) appears in Luke 2.25 and three times in Acts 2.25, 8.2, 22.12, but nowhere else in the NT, thus forging another unique literary link between Luke 1–2 and Acts. A similarly rare term *eusebē*, also translated *devout*, appears just twice in Acts 10.2 and 10.7, and nowhere else in the NT. *Sebomenē* occurs six times in Acts and only twice in the rest of the NT. None of these terms appear in Luke 3–24. It is suspicious that the author of Acts is able to deploy several terms to cite eleven instances of *devout* or worshipful individuals in Acts and one in Luke 2, but none in Luke 3–24. This contributes to the impression that the author of 3–24 was operating with a different lexicon. It is an argument from silence, but it is consistent with other indicators that Luke 1–2 and 3–24 were composed under different circumstances by different authors.

To summarize, (a) Luke 3.1 functions well from a structural perspective as the beginning of the gospel (per Streeter), (b) the interpretations of Mary, Israel, and the traditions of the fathers in Luke 1–2 are noticeably discordant with their respective treatments in Luke 3–24, (c) the pressing anticipation of an imminent Parousia and concern for its delay in Luke 3–24 has come to be regarded as a non-issue by the time Acts was composed, (d) Luke 1–2 contains numerous terms/ideas that do not appear in Luke 3–24 but that would be expected to if chs. 1–2 were composed by the same author as an integral portion of the gospel, and (e) several rare grammatical elements in Luke 1–2 have parallel usage in Acts but not Luke 3–24. Collectively these observations suggest that Luke 1–2 and Acts came from similar literary origins and most likely the same hand, while Luke 3–24 was composed at an earlier time, perhaps by a different author.

Further Evidence of Multiple Authorship

For those who would question the premise that more than one author is responsible for “Luke–Acts,” the evidence cited thus far might either be dismissed as coincidental or explained as rational and deliberate shifts in interpretation or emphasis by a single author who may have written Luke and Acts at different times under different circumstances. Therefore, in support of the present thesis, it will be helpful to cite additional data that tilt the needle more decisively toward multiple authorship. These data are as follows:

1. Indeed (μὲν). One of the striking incidental grammatical features of Acts is its excessive use of the word **μὲν**, typically translated *indeed*. This term occurs 182 times in the NT, 48 of which are in Acts, making Acts the book with the highest concentration of this term (by far) in the NT. Other NT books in which **μὲν** is used frequently include Matthew, Romans, 1 Corinthians, and Hebrews, in which it appears about twenty times each. Conversely, **μὲν** appears only ten times in Luke. Since Luke is slightly longer than Acts in word count, the author of Acts uses **μὲν** with five times the frequency as does the author of Luke. Its exceptional frequency in Acts constitutes idiosyncratic usage by the author, for there is nothing in the subject matter of Acts that would require a substantially increased usage of **μὲν compared to other NT books**. Since this phenomenon does not exist in Luke, if Luke and Acts were composed by the same writer, we must assume that something transpired between the writing of Luke and Acts that caused the writer to develop an exceptional fondness for this term in the interim. It is as easy to suppose that this anomaly reflects the grammatical predilections of two different authors.

2. Baptism. The author of Luke has no interest in water baptism as a sacramental rite of passage. He notes that John’s baptism was for repentance for the remission of sins (3.3), and that John baptized with water, but Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire (3.16). Jesus himself is baptized by John, but once Jesus’ mission begins, baptism is no longer a feature of it. In Luke, one is saved through faith and the ritual of baptism is not represented as relevant. The only mention of a baptism to be performed by Jesus occurs in the context of judgment:

Luke 12.49 "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled! 50 I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how I am constrained until it is accomplished! 51 Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division;

The absence in Luke of baptism as a sacramental ritual stands in contrast to Acts, for the author of Acts routinely promotes water baptism as an essential rite of passage into the church:

Acts 2.38 And Peter said to them, "**Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ** for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2.41 So those **who received his word were baptized**, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Acts 8.12 But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, **they were baptized**, both men and women. 13 Even Simon himself believed, **and after being baptized** he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed.

Acts 8.14 Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, 15 who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit; 16 for it had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had **only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus**. 17 Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

Acts 8.36 And as they went along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "**See, here is water! What is to prevent my being baptized?**" 38 And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, **and he baptized him**. 39 **And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught up Philip**; and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.

Acts 9.17 So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came, has sent me that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18 And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight. **Then he rose and was baptized**, 19 and took food and was strengthened.

Acts 10.46 For they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, 47 **"Can anyone forbid water for baptizing these people** who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" 48 **And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.**

Acts 16.31 And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." 32 And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in his house. **33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their wounds, and he was baptized at once, with all his family.**

Acts 18.8 Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with all his household; and **many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.**

Acts 19.2 And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." 3 And he said, **"Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism."** 4 **And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance,** telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." 5 **On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.**

Acts 22.16 And now why do you wait? **Rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins,** calling on his name.'

In summary, the author of Luke has no concept of baptism as a sacramental ritual practice for believers. John baptizes, but the law and the prophets (and evidently the practice of water baptism) come to an end with John (16.16); after this, according to Luke, the good news of the kingdom of God is preached. Unlike the Great Commission in Matthew wherein the disciples are instructed to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Mt 28.19), in Luke they are simply instructed to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins in his name to all nations (Lk 24.47).

The silence on the ritual of baptism in Luke and its extensive promotion as an essential rite of passage in Acts is a conspicuous discontinuity. It is most easily explained by assuming that Luke was composed several decades earlier than Acts, at a time when the young movement had not yet visualized the ritual of baptism as a rite of

passage for the believer, while Acts reflects the existence of an institutional *church* that had established baptism as a formal sacrament. It appears that some significant amount of time had elapsed between the writing of Luke and Acts, which increases the likelihood of authorship by different writers. The term *ekklēsia* appears 23 times in Acts but not once in Luke.

3. The Crucifixion. The author of Luke claims that Jesus died on a cross (*stauroon*) (9.23, 14.27, 23.26). *Stauroon* is the term used exclusively in all four gospels. Conversely, the author of Acts never mentions *stauroon*. Rather, on three occasions Acts indicates that Jesus was hanged on a tree (*xylou*) (5.30, 10.39, 13.29). Just as *stauroon* is never used in Acts, the idea that Jesus was *hanged on a tree* never appears in Luke. This mutually exclusive terminology is cause for speculation—why would a single author have devised two different descriptions of the manner of Jesus’ death, one for use in Luke and the other in Acts?

Related to this is the fact that the author of Acts accuses the Jewish elite of having executed Jesus directly—the specter of Roman crucifixion is substantially muted if not eliminated:

5.29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. 30 **The God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a tree.**

10.39 And we are witnesses to all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. **They put him to death by hanging him on a tree.**

13.28 Though they could charge him with nothing deserving death, yet they asked Pilate to have him killed. 29 And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, **they took him down from the tree**, and laid him in a tomb.

In short, the idea that Jesus died on a Roman cross is prominent in Luke but has been for all practical purposes eliminated from Acts. If this were the same author we must suppose, once again, that he changed his mind in the interim or developed a unique sensitivity to the issue that he did not have when writing Luke. Although this is

conceivable, it adds to a growing list of issues on which the author has changed his perspective between the writing of Luke and Acts.

4. The Word of the Lord. “The word of the Lord” is a distinctive idiomatic phrase that occurs eight times in Acts (8.25, 11.16, 13.49, 15.35, 15.36, 16.32, 19.10, 19.20). It serves as a stylistic alternative to *the word of God*. To the contrary, *the word of the Lord* occurs only once in Luke, but in context it has a quite different meaning:

22.61 And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered **the word of the Lord**, how he had said to him, "Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times."

In Luke 22.61 *the word of the Lord* refers to a specific comment of Jesus regarding Peter's denials. The phrase is not synonymous with “the word of God” as it is in Acts. The frequent use of *the word of the Lord* in Acts and its absence in Luke is consistent with authorship at different times, under different circumstances, or by different authors.

5. Signs and wonders and miracles. For the author of Acts, the performance of signs, wonders, and miracles by Jesus and the apostles goes hand in hand with their proclamation of the word. Signs and wonders were instrumental in inspiring belief:

Acts 2.22 "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with **mighty works and wonders and signs** which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know —

Acts 2.43 And fear came upon every soul; and many **wonders and signs** were done through the apostles.

Acts 4.29 And now, Lord, look upon their threats, and grant to thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness, 30 while thou stretch out thy hand to heal, and **signs and wonders** are performed through the name of thy holy servant Jesus."

Acts 5.12 Now many **signs and wonders** were done among the people by the hands of the apostles.

Acts 6.8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, did great **wonders and signs** among the people

Acts 7.36 He led them out, having performed **wonders and signs** in Egypt and at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness for forty years.

Acts 8.5 Philip went down to a city of Samaria, and proclaimed to them the Christ. 6 And the multitudes with one accord gave heed to what was said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the **signs** which he did.

Acts 8.13 Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing **signs and great miracles** performed, he was amazed.

Acts 14.3 So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting **signs and wonders** to be done by their hands.

Acts 15.12 And all the assembly kept silence; and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what **signs and wonders** God had done through them among the Gentiles.

The prominence and reliance upon “signs and wonders” in Acts contradicts the position that the author of Luke takes on the subject. The two terms translated “wonders” in Acts (*terrata* and *terasí*) occur nine times in Acts but are absent in Luke. Furthermore, the author of Luke never portrays Jesus as one who performed “signs” to inspire belief. To the contrary, his hearers want him to perform signs, but he declines:

Luke 11.15 But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons"; 16 while others, **to test him, sought from him a sign from heaven.**

Luke 11.29 When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, "This generation is an evil generation; **it seeks a sign, but no sign shall be given** to it except the sign of Jonah.

Luke 17.20 Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, he answered them, "**The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed**; 21 nor will they say, 'Lo, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."

Luke 23.8 When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was

hoping to see some **sign** done by him. 9 So he questioned him at some length; but he made no answer.

In short, the author of Acts boldly proclaims that Jesus did many signs and wonders, that the staging of miracles was central to his message, and that the apostles continued this tradition through the power of the Holy Spirit. Conversely, the author of Luke never mentions “wonders” and rejects the notion that Jesus performed signs for the purpose of self-promotion. Jesus does perform miracles and healings in Luke, but they are never referred to as signs and wonders as they are in Acts.

In the end, one must ask why a single author would have suppressed the idea that Jesus was performing signs and wonders to inspire belief in Luke, only to embrace the opposite position in Acts?

6. Sect/School. A unique and distinctive grammatical proclivity of the author of Acts is to refer to the Sadducees, the Pharisees, and the Nazarenes, by a technical term *haireseis*, typically translated *sects* or *schools*. The term is used by Josephus in describing the formal sects or philosophies in Judaism. An extended description of these various sects is found in *Antiquities* XVIII.1.2–6, in close proximity to the famous *Testimonium Flavianum*⁴ in *Antiquities* XVIII.3.3.

Acts 5.17 But the high priest rose up and all who were with him, that is, the **sect [haireseis]** of the Sadducees, and filled with jealousy 18 they arrested the apostles and put them in the common prison.

⁴ The *Testimonium Flavianum* is the controversial citation of Jesus by Josephus which reads as follows: *About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was one who performed surprising deeds and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Messiah. And when, upon the accusation of the principal men among us, Pilate had condemned him to a cross, those who had first come to love him did not cease. He appeared to them spending a third day restored to life, for the prophets of God had foretold these things and a thousand other marvels about him. And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared.* (*Antiquities* 18.3.3) This text is thought by most scholars to be either modified or entirely interpolated by Christian scribes since a Jewish historian would not have written such a declaration. It is suspiciously placed in that it appears in a chapter discussing seditious activities against Pontius Pilate. One must wonder whether an original reference to a seditious Jesus movement was deleted and replaced by this Christian reinterpretation.

15.5 But some believers who belonged to the **sect [haireseos]** of the Pharisees rose up, and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses."

24.5 For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, an agitator among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the **sect [haireseos]** of the Nazarenes.

24.14 But this I admit to you, that according to the Way, which they call a **sect [hairesein]**, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the law or written in the prophets,

26.5 They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest **sect [hairesein]** of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee.

28.21 And they said to him, "We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brethren coming here has reported or spoken any evil about you. 22 But we desire to hear from you what your views are; for with regard to this **sect [haireseos]** we know that everywhere it is spoken against."

Thus, the author of Acts is accustomed to thinking of the various Jewish factions as sects or schools and referring to them as such. This distinctive language does not exist in Luke. The author of Luke frequently refers to the Pharisees and in one instance the Sadducees, but without any attempt to identify the Pharisees and Sadducees as *sects* of Judaism. Notably, not only does the author of Acts identify the Sadducees and Pharisees as sects of Judaism, he elevates the Nazarenes to the status of a competing school within Judaism as well (Acts 24.5).

Steve Mason regards this as compelling evidence that the author of Acts (whom he, by academic convention, refers to as "Luke"), was aware of the work of Josephus:

It is truly remarkable that Acts takes over Josephus's classification of the Pharisees and Sadducees as "philosophical schools" (*haireseis*; Acts 5.17, 15.5, 26.5), as if this terminology was self-evidently appropriate. The powerful "school of the Sadducees" opposes Jesus' followers (Acts 5.17), and some believers who belong to the "school of the Pharisees" insist on circumcising Gentile converts (Acts 15.5). Luke's Paul even calls the Pharisaic group the "most precise school" among the Jews (Acts 26.5). This is a triple coincidence because: the school language is part of

Josephus's presentation; "precision" (*akribēia*) is also one of Josephus's key terms; and Josephus routinely claims that the Pharisees are reputed to be the most precise of the schools (*War* 1.110; 2.162; *Ant.* 17.41; *Life* 189). We do not know of any author but Josephus who called the Pharisees and Sadducees "philosophical schools" or the Pharisees the most precise school, yet we do know that this presentation fits with Josephus's carefully developed defense of Judaism. If Luke did not know Josephus's work, how did this language suggest itself to him?

Still more interesting is that Acts presents the Christian faith as yet another Jewish school (*hairesis*) (24.5) ⁵

With regard to the present theory, the question is why a single author writing both Luke and Acts would have defined these various groups as *sects* in Acts, ostensibly per the influence of Josephus, while he had no thought to do so in Luke? On the assumption that this was a single author, one might imagine that he had gained an awareness of Josephus sometime after he had composed Luke but prior to the writing of Acts, indicating a time lag between the composition of the two. Yet, this difference in behavior is as easily explained by supposing that Luke and Acts were composed by different authors, only the latter of whom knew Josephus.

7. Holy Spirit. There are 57 references to the Holy Spirit in Acts, averaging about two per chapter. There are seven in Luke 1–2, and only ten in Luke 3–24. This of course is related to the nature of the subject matter since Acts is an account of the apostles taking the gospel to the world under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. So the infrequent reference to the Holy Spirit in Luke 3–24 compared to Acts is not germane. However, there is an essential difference in the way the Holy Spirit is portrayed in Acts—the Spirit becomes vocal and interactive with the apostles:

Acts 8.27 And he rose and went. And behold, an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a minister of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of all her treasure, had come to Jerusalem to worship 28 and was returning; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. 29 **And the Spirit said to Philip,** "Go up and join this chariot."

⁵ Mason, Steve, Josephus and the New Testament, 2002, pp. 288–9

Acts 10.19 And while Peter was pondering the vision, **the Spirit said to him**, "Behold, three men are looking for you. 20 Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation; for I have sent them."

Acts 13.2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, **the Holy Spirit said**, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

Acts 21.11 And coming to us he took Paul's girdle and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "**Thus says the Holy Spirit**, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this girdle and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'"

In Acts, the Holy Spirit becomes a *verbal personage* who engages in direct conversation with humans. This does not occur in Luke, wherein the Spirit is an amorphous entity, an indwelling inspirational force that is given to the believer by God. In Luke, one may be filled with the Spirit, led by the Spirit, and guided by the power of the Holy Spirit, but one is never given verbal commands as if from an independent conscious overlord capable of speech. Therefore, the author of Acts has developed a wholly different concept of the nature and activity of the Holy Spirit compared to that imagined in Luke.

8. Faith vs "the faith." In Luke, the term "faith" (*pistis*) refers exclusively to a state of mind that one possesses. Examples include "Your faith has saved you." (7.50), "Where is your faith?" (8.25), "If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed..." (17.6), and "Your faith has made you well." (19.19). Though this usage is found in Acts as well, the author of Acts also uses the term in a distinctively different context preceded by a definite article. In Acts, the phrase *the faith* becomes another established idiom or figure of speech synonymous with *the gospel* or *the word*:

6.7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to **the faith**.

13.8 But Elymas the magician ... withstood them, seeking to turn away the proconsul from **the faith**.

14.21 When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Ico'nium and to Antioch, 22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in **the faith**, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

16.5 So the churches were strengthened in **the faith**, and they increased in numbers daily.

The phrase *the faith* is foreign to the *Gospel of Luke*. So we have another example of language that had become common vernacular in an institutionalized church in Acts that was not yet in use at the time Luke was composed.

9. Worship. The explicit concept of “worship” is rare in Luke 3–24. The term only occurs three times, two of which are in Luke 4.7–8, where Satan tempts Jesus to worship him, to which Jesus responds, “You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.” In this exchange, the verb *proskynes* is used twice. The only other reference to worship in Luke 3–24 occurs in the last sentence of the gospel, “and they *having worshipped* him returned to Jerusalem...” (*proskynesantes*, 24.52).

Proskynes is also used four times in Acts (7.43, 8.27, 10.25, 24.11). However, editorial focus on the practice of worship is far more prominent in Acts than it is in Luke, and additional grammar is used. In addition to the four uses of *proskynes* there are eight references to worship using the verbs *sebomene* (Acts 13.43, 13.50, 16.14, 17.4, 17.7, 18.7), *sebesthai* (18.13), and *sebetai* (19.27). None of this grammar is found in Luke. Thus, if Luke and Acts were composed by the same author it appears that, in addition to placing more emphasis on the practice of worship in Acts than he does in Luke, the author has developed new modes of expression for use in Acts alone.

10. Evolved Ecclesial Language. Acts contains an array of terms that (a) do not exist in Luke, and (b) appear to be later modes of expression consistent with the evolved rhetoric of an established institutional church. Noted thus far are the promotion of baptism as a sacrament, the increased focus on worship in general, the formal use of *Jesus Christ* as a proper name, and the use of phrases *the word* and *the faith*. Other examples include:

- **Christian(s)** (Acts 11.26, 26.28). Along with 1 Peter 4.16, these are the only three references to followers of Jesus as “Christians” in the NT. Since the formal designation “Christians” does not exist in any of the four gospels or letters of Paul, it appears to be a term that came into use at the end of the first century or early second century. The term *Christianos* appears in the Annals of Tacitus (15.44), the estimated date of which is 116 CE.
- **Church(es)**. As noted, the term *ekklēsia* typically translated church(es) is used 23 times in Acts but not once in Luke.
- **Converts** (2.11, 6.5, 13.43). The term *proselyton* occurs three times in Acts and refers to Gentile converts or proselytes. This word occurs nowhere else in the NT.
- **Ministry** (1.17, 1.25, 6.1, 6.4, 11.29, 12.25, 20.24, 21.19). The term *diakonia* in Acts has come to refer to the missionary activity of the church. This usage does not exist in Luke. The term appears twice in Luke 10.40, but in a different context unrelated to the ministry of the church. So it is another example of language, like *charis* and the *word of the Lord*, being used in contexts in 3–24 that are unrelated to their usage in Acts.
- **Apostles and elders**. In Luke 3–24 the term *elders* (*presbyteron*) refers exclusively to Jewish elite leaders who oppose Jesus. In Acts, *elders* has become a common reference to supervising authorities who have been appointed in the churches (14.23), and “apostles and elders” are mentioned together (15.2,4,6, 15.22,23, 16.4) The author’s perspective on the deployment of this term has changed dramatically between Luke and Acts.
- **Brethren/brothers** (*adelphoi*). The plural forms of the term translated *brethren* or *brothers* occur ten times in Luke and 53 times in Acts. However, nine of the ten uses in Luke refer to familial blood-relation brothers. Only once in Lk 22.32 is the contextual usage related to fellow believers. In Acts, all 53 refer to a community of fellow believers or adherents to faith. In most instances it refers to Christian community but on occasion Paul addresses fellow Jews as brothers. Acts was

written at a time when the use of “brothers” in reference to the community of believers at large had become ubiquitous and established rhetoric in the church. This usage is absent in Luke excepting the one incidental mention in 22.32.

Collectively, that a body of ecclesial rhetoric is present in Acts but rare or absent in Luke indicates that a far more formal institutionalized church structure has evolved in the time that elapsed between the production of Luke and Acts. It is not possible to determine how long this evolution of culture from a Jesus movement to a formal institutionalized Christian church would have taken, but it is certain that Luke and Acts reflect two entirely different cultural expressions of Christianity at quite different stages of evolution. At a minimum this indicates a significant time lapse between them. The odds of authorship of Luke 3–24 and Acts by two different authors are increased under this scenario.

Did the authors of Luke and Acts know Josephus?

The question of whether the author(s) of Luke and/or Acts had knowledge of the works of Josephus is relevant to the question of authorship as well as the dating of these two works. It also has implications for the chronological sequencing of Mark, Luke, and Matthew. Of course, if the authors of Luke or Acts knew *Antiquities* in particular, they must be dated post 93 CE. The proposition that the author of “Luke–Acts” was aware of the works of Josephus has been advanced by several scholars, notably Steve Mason (*Josephus and the New Testament*, 1992/2002) and Richard Pervo (*Dating Acts*, 2006 and *Acts: A Commentary (Hermeneia)*, 2008). The proposal has stimulated discussion and controversy among scholars with no apparent consensus.

The aspect of this debate that is germane to this discussion is that the textual evidence cited by those advocating “Luke’s” awareness of Josephus is located overwhelmingly in Acts, not Luke. This is relevant to the present thesis in that I argue that “Luke–Acts” was never written as a combined volume, and that while Luke 1–2 and Acts came from the same hand, Luke 3–24 did not. So if Luke 3–24 is an early work, written either by the author of Acts decades earlier, or by a different author entirely, then it is possible that the author of Luke 1–2/Acts knew Josephus while the author of Luke 3–

24 did not. Moreover, to the extent that one is persuaded by the arguments that the author of Acts knew Josephus, yet finds scant evidence of the awareness of Josephus in Luke 3–24, this serves as supporting data consistent with the proposition that Luke 3–24 and Luke 1–2/Acts were written by different authors, decades apart.

Steve Mason’s concluding statement in *Josephus and the New Testament* summarizes his argument for Luke’s awareness of Josephus as follows:

I cannot prove beyond doubt that Luke knew the writings of Josephus. If he did not, however, we have a nearly incredible series of coincidences which require that Luke knew something that closely approximated Josephus’s narrative in several distinct ways. This source (or these sources) spoke of: Agrippa’s death after his robes shone [*Acts 12.21–23*]; the extramarital affairs of both Felix [*Acts 24.22*] and Agrippa II [*Acts 25.13*]; the harshness of the Sadducees toward Christianity [*Acts 4.1, 5.17*]; the census under Quirinius as a watershed event in Palestine [*Luke 2.2*]; Judas the Galilean as an arch rebel at the time of the census [*Acts 5.37*]; Judas, Theudas, and the unnamed “Egyptian” as three rebels in the Jerusalem area worthy of special mention among a host of others [*Acts 5.36,37, 21.38*]; Theudas and Judas in the same piece of narrative [*Acts 5.36–37*]; the Egyptian, the desert, and the *sicarii* in close proximity [*Acts 21.38*]; Judaism as a philosophical system [*Acts 26.5*]; the Pharisees and Sadducees as philosophical schools [*Acts 15.5, 5.17*]; and the Pharisees as the most precise of the schools [*Acts 26.5*]. We know of no other work that even remotely approximated Josephus’s presentation of such a wide range of issues. I find it easier to believe that Luke knew something of Josephus’s work than that he independently arrived at these points of agreement.⁶ (*citations added*)

Of course, Mason is operating on the conventional assumption that the writer we call “Luke” was the author of both Luke and Acts as a combined work, and thus he assumes that this author must have had access to Josephus for the writing of both. However, it is striking that in Mason’s summary of what he interprets as fifteen of the most compelling parallels between Josephus and “Luke-Acts,” fourteen are located in Acts, one in Luke 2.2, and *none* in Luke 3–24. This is consistent with the present theory that the author of Luke 1–2 and Acts knew Josephus while the author of Luke 3–24 did not.

This is not to suggest that Mason does not reach for connections between Luke 3–24 and Josephus; he does, and understandably so. When one assumes that “Luke-Acts” was a combined volume composed by a single

⁶ Mason, Steve, *Josephus and the New Testament*, 2nd ed., 2003, p. 292

author and finds parallels between Acts and Josephus, one would certainly want to find parallels between Luke and Josephus as well. Mason cites four possibilities, although he characterizes them as “minor parallels” and acknowledges that “*by themselves, these parallels are too vague to establish a relationship between the texts.*”⁷ The four that he cites are as follows:

- Luke’s mention of Lysanias, tetrarch of Abilene (Luke 3.1; cf. *War* 2.215, 247)
- Luke’s parable of the man who traveled to another country to receive his kingship but was hated by his own people whom he punished with death, seems like a thinly veiled reference to the family of Herod as described by Josephus (Luke 19.12–27; *War* 1.282–285)
- Luke’s description of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, including a reference to the slaughter of children (Luke 19.43–44; *War* 6 in general)
- Luke’s reference to Pilate’s attack on Galileans (13.1) sounds somewhat like Josephus’s account of Pilate’s dealings with Samaritans at Mount Gerizim (*Ant.* 18.85–87)

It is curious that three of the four potential Josephus parallels in Luke 3–24 cited by Mason are found in *Jewish War* published about 75 CE, not *Antiquities*. The present theory postulates that Luke 3–24 was composed no later than about 80 CE, while Luke 1–2/Acts did not appear until perhaps 100–120. Under this scenario the author of Luke 3–24 could conceivably have been aware of *War*, but not *Antiquities*. Meanwhile, the one suspected parallel between 3–24 and *Antiquities*, that of Luke’s allusion to violent conflict with Galileans in 13.1 being inspired by Josephus’s account of Pilate’s attack on Samaritans, is among the most tenuous and speculative of the parallels proposed by Mason. In fact, all four of these references in Luke 3–24 could well have reflected common knowledge of the war, memories of Herod and Pilate’s sordid history, etc., and had nothing to do with a knowledge of Josephus. In my view, Mason is on firmer ground with the parallels that he cites between Josephus and Acts, as well as his discussion of the parallel references between Acts and Josephus regarding the philosophical schools of Judaism. His observations are in perfect harmony with the

⁷ Mason, p. 282–3

theory that the author of Luke 1–2/Acts did know Josephus while the author of Luke 3–24 did not.

Was Luke 1.1–4 Original or Interpolated?

We may now turn to a question that holds a vital key to the interpretation of Luke and Acts: Was Luke's preface in 1.1–4 part of the original gospel, or was it added along with the rest of Luke 1–2 as part of the interpolation? As noted at the outset, Bart Ehrman has assumed the preface was original and that the interpolated material consists of 1.5–2.52. This was my initial assumption as well, for the alternative implies a manipulation of the documents that seems difficult to imagine—if 1.1–4 was not original it suggests that the author of Acts has fabricated and inserted the two hails to Theophilus for the purpose of artificially binding Luke and Acts into a single work, thereby claiming for Acts an authority that it would not have had as an independent work by an unknown writer. Yet upon further consideration, there is no reason to assume that this would have been done for overtly sinister purposes. One might still maintain, for example, a notion of single authorship, that the author of Luke 3–24 did indeed commence at 3.1, that he subsequently composed Acts several decades later after having adopted new perspectives on a host of topics, and that he himself wanted to integrate Acts as a continuing sequel to his original work. One might also imagine a scenario in which Luke 1–2 and Acts were the work of an acolyte of the author of Luke whose intent was to defend and expand upon the general Lukan tradition. Perhaps he wrote Luke 1–2/Acts for the purpose of augmenting Luke in order to expand its scope and lend it further gravitas within the church. We should even consider that it may have been done in a competitive spirit to create a Lukan corpus that would surpass the scope of Matthew.

We have already considered several examples of grammar in Luke 1–2 that also appear in Acts but do not occur in Luke 3–24, including the term *charis* in 2.40 in reference to the grace of God; *Savior* in Luke 2.11, also found in Acts 5.31 and 13.23; *Nazareth* with its distinctive spelling in Luke 1–2 also found in Acts 10.38, and *Christ* as a proper name (2.11). Devout (*eulabēs*) appears in Luke 2.25 and three times in Acts 2.25, 8.2, 22.12, but nowhere else in the NT. To these we may add the term *despota* (Lord/Master) which is also exceedingly rare in the NT, occurring only in Luke 2.29 and Acts 4.24, and the unique phrase *by the mouths of the holy prophets of old* in Luke 1.70, which is replicated essentially verbatim in Acts 3.21, with no

parallel in Luke 3–24. It is as if the author of Luke 1–2 and Acts was using one lexicon and the author of Luke 3–24 another.

The question, then, is to what degree might the grammar used in Luke 1.1–4 uniquely reflect usage in either Acts or Luke 3–24 but not the other? Is there a pattern that would suggest that the 42 words in 1.1–4 were compiled by the author of Acts or by the author of Luke 3–24? I submit that there is. This preface consists of 42 words that can be categorized into three distinct groups:

1. Terms exclusive to 1.1–4. There are four terms (*epeideper*, *anataxasthai*, *diegesin*, and *autoptai*) which do not occur anywhere else in the NT. Since they do not appear either in Luke 3–24 or Acts, their usage in the preface is not relevant for this inquiry.

2. Common parts of speech. Of the 42 words in the preface, 17 are articles, prepositions, conjunctions, or otherwise common vocabulary used many dozens or hundreds of times in the NT. Since they commonly appear in both Luke 3–24 and Acts, they shed no light on the question of authorship of the preface.

3. Terms relatively rare in the NT. The remaining 21 words in the preface are not exclusive to 1.1–4 but are relatively rare in the NT, occurring elsewhere in most cases just a handful of times. This high concentration of distinctive terminology is associated overwhelmingly with usage in Acts but not Luke 3–24. To illustrate, relatively rare terms which appear in the same or similar form in Luke 1.1–4 and Acts, but *do not* appear in Luke 3–24, are as follows:

Luke 1.1
epecheirēsan: Acts 19.13, 19.29
pragmatōn: *pragma* in Acts 5.4

Luke 1.2
archēs: Acts 26.4
hypēretai: Acts 5.22,26; *hypēretēn* exclusive to Acts 13.5, 26.16

Luke 1.3
edoxe: Acts 15.22, 25, 28, 34; *edoxa*: Acts 26.19

kamoi: Acts 8.19, 10.28
anōthen: Acts 26.5
akribōs: Acts 18.25 (*akribesteron*, exclusive to Acts 18.26,
23.15, 23.20, 24.22)
kratiste: Acts 24.3, 26.25
Theophile: Acts 1.1

Luke 1.4
katēchēthēs: variants in Acts 18.25, 21.21, 21.24
asphaleian: *asphaleia* in Acts 5.23

In summary, of the 21 terms in 1.1–4 that are used infrequently elsewhere in the NT, twelve are used in the same or similar forms in Acts but not in Luke 3–24. The one proper name Theophile may be ignored, but the remaining eleven are germane, for there is no similar example of a rare term being used in 1.1–4 that also occurs in 3–24 but not in Acts. It is impossible to imagine that the author of 3–24, had he written 1.1–4 to open the original *Gospel of Luke*, would have reserved so many rare terms in this preface for exclusive use in Acts several decades later. On the other hand, if the author of Acts had composed Luke 1.1–4 at the same time he was composing Acts, exclusive grammatical correlations between 1.1–4 and Acts are to be expected. Furthermore, as noted, the distinctive idiom *the word* (1.2) as a synonymous alternative to *the gospel* is consistent with its frequent usage in Acts but not Luke 3–24.

Collectively, these data indicate that Luke 1.1–4 was composed by the author of Acts as a preface for the interpolation of Luke 1–2, and that the original *Gospel of Luke* commenced at 3.1 without an introductory greeting to Theophilus. The unavoidable corollary is that the author of Acts created the twin references to Theophilus with the intent to *make it appear as if Luke and Acts were two parts of a combined volume*, for whatever reasons he may have had.

Now, it is certainly possible to imagine that the author of Luke 1–2 and Acts was also the original author of Luke 3–24, but we must abandon the notion that the so-called “Luke–Acts” was written from the outset as a combined volume. The author of Luke 3–24 would have had no way to anticipate that he would one day write a separate work on the evolved church several decades later. And we could imagine that in the intervening decades he may have changed his mind on Mary, the relevance of Israel, the hostility

of the Pharisees, the means of Jesus' execution, the nature of the Holy Spirit, and so on. He may have developed a broader vocabulary and a unique fondness for the term **μὲν**. In the interim, he may also have become familiar with the works of Josephus. I would not argue that this is impossible. But at some point we must consider that if a single author had undergone such a wholesale metamorphosis by the time he wrote Acts, in practical terms he was no longer the author he was when he wrote Luke 3–24. So it really does not matter if this was the same author or a different author embracing the original Lukan tradition. What matters is that we come to regard Luke 3–24 as a discrete proto-Luke that was in circulation for decades prior to the writing of Acts, and that we recognize the academy's pervasive use of the hyphenated "Luke-Acts" as a misleading trademark that distorts the historical origin of the texts.



A New Perspective on the Synoptic Problem

The findings here have implications for the dating of Luke 3–24 as well as the perceived chronological order of the Synoptics. Without the advanced theological baggage of Luke's infancy narratives on the front end, Luke 3–24 commences at the same point in the narrative as its source the *Gospel of Mark*. Accordingly, it appears to be a more primitive composition than it otherwise does with chs. 1–2 in place, and without any association with Acts. In practical terms, there is no reason to date Luke 3–24 much beyond about 80 CE. Moreover, when Luke 3–24 is read side by side with Matthew, the *Gospel of Matthew* consistently appears to be the more advanced and refined of the two. If we continue to assume a date of Matthew sometime in the 85–90 range, it opens the possibility that Matthew used both Mark and Luke 3–24. This has significant implications for the puzzle of the Synoptic Problem which we will consider in the next chapter.