

## Lesson 1 Handout – Introduction

Acts 1:1-14

Lesson 1 Answers:

1. What convincing proofs did Jesus present showing he was (is) alive?  
Jesus appeared to them over a forty-day period. He predicted the Holy Spirit would come to them receiving knowledge and power. Jesus appeared once to the disciples who were locked in a closed room.
2. Did these people understand yet the statement: “..in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”? Why or why not?  
The Apostles did not understand the statement because right before the ascension of Jesus, they asked Jesus was He now going to *restore the kingdom*.
3. What did the men who gathered for the ascension mean by “restoring the kingdom of Israel”? What is the irony is this question?  
The men meant by *restoring the kingdom of Israel*, was Jesus now going to establish His Earthly kingdom and restore Judah to sovereign and power over all other nations. The irony is that Jesus by ascending and sending the Holy Spirit was restoring the kingdom (church) as intended for all nationalities.
4. What is the timeline or order to the witnessing of the Gospel to the world?  
Verse 8 indicates that “..you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”
5. Where are the “ends of the earth”?  
The *ends of the earth* means all over the globe known as the Earth.
6. What is the significance of Jesus being “taken up before their very eyes”?  
The Apostles had to see Jesus ascend to verify as eyewitnesses that He did in fact ascend through the sky to Heaven.
7. How will Jesus return at the end of time?  
Jesus will return at the end of time in the same way He left, that is, through the sky from Heaven.
8. How many times will Jesus return?  
Once. *He will come back the same way He left*. He left once; he will return once.
9. From what location did Jesus ascend?  
Verse 12 indicated He ascended from the Mount of Olives.

## Acts of the Apostles

---

10. How far is “a Sabbath day’s walk”?

*A Sabbath days walk is 2000-cubits or about 3/5-mile (1-kilometer).*

11. What is significant about those present in the room where they stayed?

*Along with the eleven Apostles, there were women, Mary the mother of Jesus, and the brothers of Jesus.*

12. What were they doing?

*They were constantly in prayer.*

# Acts of the Apostles

---

## Cameo 1

### *The Big World View*

- 6 AD – **Herod Deposed** – Herod Archelaus was deposed by the Roman Emperor, Augustus because of Herod Archelaus brutal treatment of the Jews of Judea and Samaria.
- 9 AD – **German Tribes Destroy 3 Roman Legions** – Three Roman legions under the command of P Quinctilius Varnus were defeated by a German army led by Ariminus. The battle took place in the Teutoburg Forest, and resulted in Varnus committing suicide. The results of this battle ensured German independence from Rome.
- 9 AD – **Hsin Dynasty** – Wang Mang founded the short-lived Hsin Dynasty. He instituted wide-ranging reforms that included breaking up large estates, and freeing of slaves. There was a great deal of opposition to his policies and he was eventually forced to tax slaveholding instead of releasing slaves. Wang Mang instituted a series of price controls on staples. His opponents fomented revolts against him and in 23 he was killed during one such revolt.
- 14 AD – **Tiberius Secedes Augustus** – Augustus died on August 19<sup>th</sup> at Nola. While legally all of his powers ceased with his demise, Augustus had arranged for his family members to succeed him. Thus Tiberius, the son of Augustus wife Livia by her first marriage, became the new Emperor of Rome.
- 25 AD – **Han Dynasty Founded** – After the death of Wang Mang, Hou Han founded the Eastern Han Dynasty. During this dynasty, which lasted until 220, Buddhism was introduced into China.
- 30 AD – **Jesus Christ** was put to death by the Romans in Jerusalem on April 7<sup>th</sup>
- 41 AD – **Caligula Assassinated** – After the death of Tiberius, he was succeeded by Caligula. Caligula was considered by many to be insane. He was assassinated by Cassius Chaerea, a member of the Praetorian Guard on January 24<sup>th</sup> in the year 41 A.D.
- 51 AD – **Conquest Of Wales Completed By Romans** – The Romans under Ostorius Scaopula defeated Carctacus of Wales. This eventually led to the complete subjugation of Wales to the Romans twenty years later.
- 54 AD – **Claudius Murdered**, Nero Emperor – According to legend, Claudius was assassinated by his wife Agrippina using poisoned mushrooms. Agrippina then arranged for her son, Nero, to become Emperor. Nero eventually had his mother killed.
- 64 AD – **Rome Burns** – The city of Rome was nearly destroyed in a catastrophic fire. The fire is said to have been set by Nero. Legend has it that ‘Rome burned while Nero fiddled’.
- 66 AD – **Judaea Rebels against Rome** – A rebellion broke out in Jerusalem against Roman rule. The Roman fortress of Antonia in Jerusalem was captured and the soldiers killed. The Romans dispatch an army from Syria to quell the revolt, but it was destroyed on the way to Jerusalem.
- 68 AD – **Year of the Four Emperors** – The year 69 A.D. is known as the year of the four emperors. Nero was assassinated and civil war erupted to determine who would succeed him. In the course of that tumultuous year, Nero was succeeded by Galba who

## Acts of the Apostles

---

was followed by Otho. Otho was defeated by Vitellius and Vespasian finally established a new dynasty. Vespasian himself was the son of a tax collector from Reate. He represented a complete break with the Augustinian dynasties that preceded him.

- 70 AD – **Jerusalem Falls** – Rome sent an enormous army under the command of Vespasian, to retake Judea. The Roman army quickly subdued the Jewish forces in the Galilee and laid siege to Jerusalem. Vespasian was recalled to Rome and the siege continued by his son, Titus. Titus succeeded in capturing Jerusalem on the ninth day of Ab (according to the Jewish calendar). He burned Jerusalem, killing or selling into slavery tens of thousands of Jews.
- 73 AD – **Masada Falls** – The Fortress of Masada, occupied by Jewish zealots opposed to Rome, held out for three years. Masada was located in the Judean Desert near the shores of the Dead Sea. When it became clear that they could hold out no longer, the defenders of Masada committed mass suicide rather than become captives of the Romans.
- 78 AD – **Kushan Dynasty**- The Kushan Dynasty was established by Kanishka. The Kushan Empire extended from Benares and Kabul to the Vindhayas. The Kushan capital was at Peshawar. The Kushans thrived on the Chinese-Roman trade that passed through their Empire.
- 79 AD – **Mount Vesuvius Explodes** – In 79 A.D., Mount Vesuvius erupted. The eruption destroyed the Roman cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Most of the cities populations managed to flee, but 20,000 inhabitants were killed.
- 80 AD – **Coliseum Dedicated** – Vespasian had ordered the Coliseum built, but it fell to his son Titus to dedicate it. It was used for gladiator games until 404 AD.
- 89 AD – **Reign Of Terror of Domitian** – Domitian who succeeded Titus Vespasianus (his older brother), commenced a reign of terror after an abortive coup against him. Domitian levied heavy taxes on the provinces. Domitian was assassinated in 96 A.D.
- 96 – 180 AD – **Five Good Emperors** – Starting with Emperor Marcus Nerva, Rome was ruled by five individuals who became known as the “Good Emperors”. The Emperors maintained both domestic tranquility and relative peace on the borders. They were known for building roads and other large civil projects. The Five Emperors were: 96-98 A.D. Marcus Nerva, 98-117 A.D. Marcus Traianus, 117-138 A.D. Publius Hadrianus (Hadrian), 138-161 A.D. Antoninus Pius, and 161-180 A.D. Marcus Aurelius.

## Jesus Came at Just the Right Time

Jeff Sanders  
2018

In Galatians 4:4-5 the Apostle Paul writes, *“When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”* And in Romans 5:6 the Apostle adds that *“at just the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.”* The Bible is clear that Jesus came to earth at the exact right time.

Why was the time during the reign of Caesar Augustus and Herod the Great so perfect? Here are seven reasons from history demonstrating how the arrival of Jesus the Messiah was not a cosmic accident, but rather a perfectly timed answer by God for a world that was ready to hear the greatest news ever.

### A unifying language

The ancient Mediterranean world had a unifying language. Greek was the universal language in the Roman Empire, and it was known in regions beyond (such as Persia). Latin was the primary language of the Western Roman Empire, and Aramaic was the first language of Jesus and His apostles, but Greek was known at least as a second language throughout the empire.

Over three hundred years before Christ, Alexander the Great had spread the language of the Greeks from Athens to Egypt to the border of India. By the time Jesus was born, Greek literature, science, and art were widely known, and one could speak Greek anywhere in the empire and be understood. The New Testament was first written in this international language of the day, and then almost immediately translated into other languages (such as Latin and Syriac/Aramaic).

### A unifying law and government

The Greco-Roman world had a unifying law and government. Roman law had unified people from modern-day Britain to Egypt under one civil code. For the most part, Roman law was just and fair for all people groups, and many people wanted to be Romans in order to benefit from their just laws.

The New Testament shows the Apostle Paul, who was both a Jew and a Roman citizen, often appealing to Roman law whenever he believed he was being treated unjustly (Acts 16:35-40). When Paul appealed to Caesar for a fair trial, it is Roman law that allowed him to be sent to Rome to stand trial before the Emperor. The story of Acts shows that Roman law was the vehicle providentially used by a sovereign God to get the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome.

# Acts of the Apostles

---

## A unifying system of trade

The Roman Empire had a unifying system of transportation. When I was in Rome a few years ago, I walked along the Appian Way — the same road, the same stones that Paul walked on along the way to prison.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph took the coastal road from Israel to Egypt to escape Herod. Peter used Roman roads to get to Caesarea to speak to Cornelius in Acts 10. Paul and his companions used Roman roads to take the gospel across Asia Minor and Greece. Soon, Christians were traveling Roman-built roads across Gaul and Hispania and North Africa. God used the network of roads that were built by Rome for His glory.

At the time of the birth of Jesus, the Roman military had also banished piracy on the high seas. Paul and his pals could take ships from Antioch to Cyprus and Asia Minor and Greece on their missionary journeys without fear of being attacked by pirates. The only major fear was of storms at sea, like the one Paul faced in Acts 27:13-44.

## The “Pax Romana”

The ancient world at that time enjoyed the “Pax Romana.” From the time of Caesar Augustus to Marcus Aurelius (27 B.C. to A.D. 180), the Mediterranean world enjoyed peace under Roman rule. Yes, there were a few outbreaks of local wars, such as the Jewish revolt in A.D. 66-73 and later the Bar Kokhba revolt of A.D. 133-135, but for the most part, the Roman Empire was free from invasions or major civil upheavals.

So the early Christian faith was born in a time of peace, and had time to expand across the empire without fear of invading armies. (Of course, the periodic persecutions, both local and empire-wide, were problems from time to time.)

## Philosophical and religious exhaustion

The pagan world at the time of Jesus’ birth was philosophically and religiously exhausted. As I read Greek and Roman stories about their gods and heroes such as “The Iliad” and “The Aeneid”, I am struck by the absolute insensitivity of the gods. They really don’t care about the human race. The gods do not love you. They have no covenants with mankind. They do not sacrifice themselves out of love to rescue or redeem sinful, fallen humans.

The gods cannot transform your life and offer no forgiveness or assurance of everlasting life. There is no promise of heaven for the faithful and certainly no resurrection. But honestly, there was nothing in the Roman pantheon or in the philosophies of Plato or Aristotle that could give hope to either slave or centurion. The faith revealed in Jesus Christ, however, was like rain falling on cracked and parched earth. Here was a God who entered the human race to go on a rescue mission and actually secure the salvation of all who would repent and believe. Unlike pagan believers, followers of Christ could actually find redemption and freedom from their old debauched lives and enter into a new transformed life here and now. Paganism had nothing to offer in comparison.

# Acts of the Apostles

---

## **The Jewish world longed for a Messiah**

The Jewish world was eagerly expecting a Messiah, but was also deeply divided and legalistic. The Jewish world certainly expected a Messiah, and although the idea of a suffering Servant-Messiah is clearly in the Old Testament (Isaiah 52:13- 53:12), it seems that most simply wanted a conquering king who would drive out the hated Romans.

There were many sects in Israel at the time, such as the Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, and Essenes. All believed they knew what was best for everyone. While the Pharisees probably had a pure motive in erecting their own traditions to prevent people from breaking the Law of Moses, they succeeding only in reducing living by faith to a man-made legalistic code that missed the whole point of loving God and loving one's neighbor.

The Jewish world had simply exchanged their former worship of stone idols for man-made traditions that became new idols. In their apostasy, they were ready for a Messiah who really could set them free.

## **The Roman world needed a census**

Ordering the census may not have been the most important thing Caesar Augustus did that day, but it set in motion a series of events that brought Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, the City of David, where the Messiah would be born (Micah 5:2). Caesar did not know he was actually the tool of God, working on just another day of activities — but ultimately He was fulfilling ancient prophecy from God's Word.

A Roman census was issued in 6 BC, and Herod died in 4 BC, so Jesus was born sometime between those two dates.

It was no accident that Jesus was born at that time. It was no accident that there was a universal language, a unifying system of law and transportation, military peace across the Mediterranean, a very barren religious world, and a census bringing a young couple unexpectedly to their ancestral hometown. It was no accident at all. It was instead ... the fullness of time.

# Acts of the Apostles

---

## Evidence that Luke authored 'The Book of Acts'

Acts of the Apostles was written about 62 AD after the two year imprisonment of Paul but before Nero's persecution. Most historians believe Acts was written by Luke, the physician, who earlier penned the Gospel of Luke.

### Explicit Evidence

Explicit evidence points to a common author for both the *Gospel of Luke* and the *Acts of the Apostles*. Both Acts and the third gospel are dedicated to Theophilus, and the book of Acts refers to a "former book." These facts provide strong evidence that the author of these books produced at least two volumes, with the Gospel of Luke being the first volume and Acts being the second volume. In fact, the connection between these two prologues reflects an ancient literary custom when an author produced two-volume works. Josephus, for instance, wrote a two-volume work entitled *Against Apion* that has similar prefaces in both volumes.

Luke 1:1-4

*Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.*

Acts 1:1

*In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach (Acts 1:1).*

### Implicit Evidence

Implicit evidence points to a common author of both books. For example, both books are ordered and shaped similarly. Furthermore, the compositional structure of books is similar, proceeding in an episodic fashion, and about the same length (filling a standard-sized scroll). Lastly, we see that the Gospel of Luke explains God's salvation to Israel while in Acts we see the light of revelation given to the Gentiles; this points to a common redemptive-historical vision between the two works, and to a shared sense of purpose and belief. And these similarities also suggest that we are looking at the works of a single author.

From the second to the fourth century A.D., the early church testified that Luke, the traveling companion of Paul, was the author of both Acts and the Gospel of Luke:

One very old manuscript, referred to as Papyrus75, was discovered in 1952 in Egypt. It was written on papyrus and includes some of our earliest New Testament manuscript evidence. It was probably copied sometime between A.D. 175 and 200, and it includes large portions of the Gospel of Luke and the Gospel of John. Between the texts of the two gospels are written two descriptions of their content. After the conclusion of the Gospel of Luke, the manuscript contains the words "*euangelion kata Loukan,*" or "the gospel according to Luke." And

## Acts of the Apostles

---

Immediately following these words is the expression “*euangelion kata Ioannan*,” or “the gospel according to John.” These notices indicate that the material preceding the words “the gospel according to Luke” was identified as Luke’s gospel. This manuscript evidence indicates that from very early on, it was believed that Luke wrote the third gospel. And by extension, it points to Luke as the author of Acts as well.

Second, the Muratorian Fragment, dated around A.D. 170 to 180, is the earliest known document listing the New Testament books that the early church considered to be canonical. After affirming Luke’s authorship of the Gospel of Luke, it explicitly points to him as the author of Acts as well. In lines 34 through 36 we read these words:

Moreover, the acts of all the apostles were written in one book... Luke compiled the individual events that took place in his presence.

This statement indicates that in the second century, it was widely believed that Luke was the author of Acts and had witnessed at least some of the events described within it.

Third, the so-called Anti-Marcionite Prologue, an introduction to the third gospel written around A.D. 160 to 180, describes the authorship of Luke and Acts in this way:

Luke, moved by the Holy Spirit, composed the whole of this Gospel... And afterwards the same Luke wrote the Acts of the Apostles.

The church father Irenaeus, who lived from around A.D. 130 to 202, believed that Luke was the author of the third gospel. In his work *Against Heresies*, book 3, chapter 1, section 1, he wrote:

Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the gospel preached by him.

Here Irenaeus referred to Acts as the book that recorded the gospel preached by Paul. His words are important because good historical evidence indicates that Irenaeus had access to firsthand knowledge regarding Luke’s authorship of Acts.

Clement of Alexandria, who lived from around A.D. 150 to 215, also referred to Luke as the author of Acts. In book 5, chapter 12 of his *Stromata*, or miscellaneous matters, he wrote these words:

Luke in the Acts of the Apostles relates that Paul said, “*Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.*”

And Tertullian, who lived from A.D. 155 to 230, wrote these words in his work *Against Marcion*, book 4, chapter 2:

Of the apostles, therefore, John and Matthew first instill faith into us... Luke and Mark renew it afterwards.

Here, Tertullian specifically attributed the third gospel to Luke.

# Acts of the Apostles

---

Finally, the great church historian Eusebius, writing around A.D. 323, mentioned Luke as the author of Acts in book 1, chapter 5, section 3 of his *Ecclesiastical History*:

Luke ... has made mention of the census in the Acts.

## Clues

There are clues revealed that help indicate authorship of these books:

1. The author of Acts did not identify himself by name. Apparently, he felt no need to name himself for the sake of his patron Theophilus. In Luke 1:3 he simply said, *“it seemed good also to me to write,”* and in Acts 1:1 he said, *“In my former book ... I wrote.”* The author assumed that his patron knew who he was. And while this created no problem for Theophilus, it has created many questions for modern readers.
2. At the same time, there are a number of things that the New Testament does tell us about our author. First, he was not an apostle. In fact, he probably came to faith after Jesus ascended into heaven. Listen to these details from the Gospel of Luke 1:1-2:

*Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word (Luke 1:1-2).*

When the author said that the events of Jesus’ life were handed down to us, he indicated that he was not an eyewitness to the life of Jesus.

3. The style of Greek in Acts and the Gospel of Luke indicates that the author was well educated. Many of the books in the New Testament are written in a fairly common, even unsophisticated style of Greek. But the Gospel of Luke and Acts show more sophistication in their use of the language.
4. The second half of Acts indicates that the author was one of Paul’s close traveling companions. In the early chapters of Acts, the narratives are consistently in the third person. But beginning in Acts 16, the narrative often takes on a first-person perspective, using words like “we” and “us.” We find this type of language in Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; and 27:1–28:16. These passages indicate that the writer accompanied Paul during Paul’s later missionary journeys and on Paul’s trip from Caesarea to Rome.

## Does Luke fit these clues?

1. Luke was not an apostle. The apostles served in a foundational role for the church, exercising unique authority on Christ’s behalf to establish the church and guard it from error and trouble. And according to Acts 1:21-22, apostles had to be trained by Jesus himself. But Luke never met Jesus in person and never claimed the type of authority that belonged to the apostles. Rather, he was simply a faithful supporting member of Paul’s missionary endeavors. He was the servant of an apostle, or as Paul described him in Philemon verse 24, *a fellow laborer* of an apostle.

## Acts of the Apostles

---

2. It is likely that Luke was well educated. We can infer this from Colossians 4:14, where Paul identified Luke as a physician. While medicine was not as formal a discipline in the days of the New Testament as it is today, it still required a person with skill and aptitude.
3. Luke was the traveling companion to Paul. The apostle Paul mentioned that Luke traveled with him in Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11; and Philemon verse 24.