

Why Did Luke Write His Two Books?

In his historical record in ACTS, Luke lets us see the Spirit-guided beginning and advancement of the new community of those God was saving. It was to be inclusive of believers in any and all nations in contrast to the limitations of the first covenant. Luke reveals how the gift of the Spirit was promised to each person being baptized and he also demonstrates how physical manifestations through the outpouring, or baptism, of the Holy Spirit identified various segments of society as being acceptable candidates for the spiritual kingdom. These included Jews, proselytes, mixed-race Samaritans, and Gentiles who, when they obeyed the gospel, were added to the same one-and-only body. My previous lesson, "*Spirit-Created Unity*," (FR 204) dealt with this matter. These visible manifestations and empowerments were not given to all, nor were they given to save any person. They were given for a limited purpose and time.

This essay deals with an intriguing side issue – sort of leaving the bear hunt to chase a rabbit. And it will only be interesting conjecture rather than indisputable proof. It will offer some possible explanations to questions asked. For instance, in FR 53, "*Luke, An Investigative Reporter*," I wondered why Luke credited no direction of the Spirit in his writing of LUKE and ACTS but claimed that they came from his own research.

After sending out last week's essay, I read the short piece included below by my friend, Wallace Bradberry, of Billings, Montana. It struck me how it would fit in my line of thought. He asked, "*Why Did Luke Write His Two Books?*" His explanation follows:

"The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles are considered by most Christian authorities to be two works of one man, Luke. A while back I picked up a book titled, "In Defense of Paul" written by John Mauck -- an attorney. He postulates that both the Gospel (as it is ordinarily supposed and named) of Luke and the book called Acts were actually written to the obviously high official Theophilus, who would have the necessary clout to render a not-guilty verdict for the reason Paul was arrested and sent to Rome, i.e. that he was promoting a new religion that was against Roman Law. Luke was a professional person -- at least a physician (Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:11) and possibly a lawyer as well.

"Judaism was legal for the Jews to practice throughout the entire Empire. Any new religion had to be State approved. The Jews tried to stop Paul from preaching Christ because Christianity was indeed different from Judaism. When one reads both volumes back to back without any interruptions, it becomes clearer that Paul was preaching that Jesus is the prophesied Messiah, and consequently, the fulfillment of that religion. Many times in Acts it is stated that Paul went into the synagogues and reasoned from the scriptures that Jesus is the Christ. If indeed Jesus IS the Messiah, then He is actually the culmination of Judaism and, therefore it would be a legal religion since it is the fulfilled extension of Judaism.

"Most likely what happened, either before, during or after Paul's trial is that the tyrant Nero just decided to have him executed anyway. Nero is considered to have been a psychopath since he murdered his mother, publicly married a 12 year old boy (He didn't

even have to go to San Francisco!) and then committed suicide. It probably didn't matter to him how much proof Theophilus offered. Paul was executed anyway.

"This idea seems to fit together much more fully than any other that I have encountered. What do you think? Blessings and kindness to all." --Wallace R. Bradberry
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When I first heard a similar explanation, it seemed to make good sense. Now I am glad to know someone has given deeper research on the subject.

Luke was not writing to you and me. He was addressing one person, Theophilus, whose name meant "friend of God," but Luke greeted him formally rather than with a common greeting of a brother in Christ. He was addressed as "most excellent Theophilus." Other similar terms of address for rulers or officials are noted: "*Claudius Lysias to his Excellency the governor Felix, greetings,*" "*most excellent Felix,*" and "*most excellent Festus*" (Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:25). So Theophilus could well have been the ruler or judge before whom Paul was to be tried, or at least one who could influence the judge or ruler. Theophilus might have been given false accusatory information by the Jews, so Luke was writing "*that you may know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed*" (Luke 1:4).

From such a viewpoint, we can see why Luke labored to show that Christianity was not a new religion but was the fulfillment of what Judaism was all about. Jesus was their prophesied Messiah whose kingdom, being spiritual, was no threat to Rome. Paul prized his Roman citizenship and preferred trial by Roman rather than Jewish rulers. Luke showed how the Holy Spirit approved and guided the whole movement which was to include believers of all nations.

Now, we ask the question as to why Luke did not tell Theophilus that his two long accounts were dictated by the Holy Spirit. He mentioned and emphasized freely the work of the Spirit in the formative church. The court, granting the Jews full exercise of their religion, would not pass judgment on such claims of the internal matters of their religion. That would have been of no concern to the court. But for evidence to be introduced in defense of Paul based on the claim that it was a revelation made to the man supplying the evidence would have been laughable. Such would not be acceptable evidence in any court of law today.

Though Luke emphasized the work of the Holy Spirit in his historical account, he made no claim for his own Spiritual guidance. If he had been writing LUKE and ACTS for you and me, however, we can believe he would have given credit to the Spirit for help. To say the least, we can believe his records were preserved providentially for us. []

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