

# The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles

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**I**T WILL NOT SURPRISE any Bible reader that the Luke who wrote one of the Gospels should also be the author of the book known as The Acts of the Apostles. It is the most obvious conclusion, given the similarities of the opening of each book:

former treatise [*logos*, account]”, and immediately overlaps with the closing ideas of his Gospel for connection (see table at bottom of this page).

Luke refers to the closing verses of his Gospel, but also expands them: we also learn how long Jesus was with the disciples (“forty days”) and

Luke 1:1-4	Acts 1:1, 2
Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us . . . it seemed good to me also . . . to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus . . .	The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up . . .

Both books are clearly by the same author, directed to the same reader. But there are also telling differences. In his Gospel, Luke states that his sources were eyewitnesses of the events he relates. In Acts, Luke is writing about events where he was, as Tyndale puts it, “present at the doing of them”, or a good deal of them at any rate, as he indicates by using the pronoun ‘we’.

Luke’s Gospel opens with a careful explanation of his object and methods in writing it. By contrast, he starts Acts simply by referring to “The

what he spoke to them about (“the kingdom of God”). In the Gospel, the emphasis is on the Lord’s actions, as he led them out to Bethany and blessed them. In Acts, the perspective shifts to that of the disciples, as they question him about restoring the kingdom to Israel (1:6). And how natural it is that in Acts Luke should mention “two men . . . in white apparel” who appeared to the disciples (Acts 1:10), just as the women had seen on that wonderful morning a few weeks before (Lk. 24:4)!

Acts 1	Luke 24
<p>3 To whom [the apostles] also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:</p> <p>4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.</p> <p>9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.</p> <p>12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day’s journey.</p>	<p>39 Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.</p> <p>49 . . . tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.</p> <p>51 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.</p> <p>52 And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.</p>

The table below considers some words and phrases found exclusively in Luke’s Gospel and Acts that support what we have already seen.

<b>Words and phrases found exclusively in Luke and Acts</b>	
‘Filled with the Holy Spirit’	Extensively, and uniquely, used by Luke: Luke 1:15, John the Baptist 1:41, Elisabeth; 1:67, Zacharias 4:1, Jesus Acts 2:4; 4:31; 13:52, apostles/disciples 4:8, Peter 6:3, The seven appointed to serve tables 6:5; 7:55, Stephen 9:17; 13:9, Paul 11:24 Barnabas
‘Fastening his eyes’, look intently, stare	Used twice in Luke, ten times in Acts Only other occurrence of the Greek expression, by Paul (2 Cor. 3:7,13)
‘Opening the Scriptures’; to open thoroughly, expound, explain	Only used by Luke in this context: Luke 24:32,45, Jesus with the disciples Acts 16:14, Lydia’s heart opened 17:3, Paul in the synagogue in Thessalonica
‘Most excellent’ (Luke 1:3)	Only used in Luke’s writings, as ‘excellent’ or ‘noble’: Acts 23:26, Claudius Lysias writing to “the most excellent governor Felix” 24:3, Tertullus’ oration to Felix, “most noble governor” 26:25, Paul’s address to Festus, “most noble Festus”
About 400 medical words unique to Luke and Acts. Of these, about 60 words occur in both books ( <i>Companion Bible</i> )	“vexed”, Luke 6:18; Acts 5:16 “taken with palsies”, Luke 5:18; Acts 8:7

The world has never been the same since the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead. His resurrection sealed the world’s fate by ensuring the defeat of sin and the ultimate triumph of righteousness. And although men and nations have gone on plotting and scheming, as did the Romans and the Jews, for their own ends, they have never been able to put out the Light, to stifle the gospel sound, or to turn aside the inevitable course of history.

The effects of the preaching of the Good News, even in societies that have only partially accepted it, have been marvellous. The gospel turned the Roman world upside down. Wherever it was accepted, it brought restraint to the victor, mercy to the vanquished and succour to the needy. Even those who have not accepted it have marvelled at its power and at the endurance it has given to the meekest of men.

But it is in the heart that the resurrection of the Lord has meant the most. It has taken away the hopelessness of sin and the certainty of death, and put in their place forgiveness, reconciliation with God, and the hope of life for evermore. “Because I live, you shall live also” is the faith of Christ by which millions have lived out their own pilgrimages, and have died, resting in the sure and blessed hope of resurrection in the Kingdom of God. For then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written:

“Death is swallowed up in victory!” Hallelujah! Amen and amen.

Even so, ‘Come Lord Jesus’.

*The concluding words of Brother John Mitchell’s two-volume work, The Pilgrimage of Jesus*