

The historical accuracy of the Luke-Acts two-volume work is frequently challenged. Scholars dispute such issues as the dating of the reign of Quirinius (Luke 1:5; 2:2) and references to Palestinian geography (Luke 4:44; 17:11) and raise additional historical questions regarding the numerous speeches in Acts (e.g., Acts 2:14-36) and the harmonious portrayal of the early church (Acts 4:32-35). The most critical historical objection to Acts concerns the details of Paul's ministry. Although certain passages suggest that Luke was a traveling companion of Paul (Acts 16:10-17; 27:1—28:16), some scholars deem this tradition untenable on the basis of perceived difficulties in harmonizing the life and perspective of Paul as presented in Acts with details about his life found in his letters.

Many of these perceived difficulties are lessened when we recall the purpose of Luke's accounts. In composing his volumes Luke did not intend to record a comprehensive history, but, rather, to offer a selective historical account to meet a pastoral need for assurance of faith (Luke 1:4). Luke acknowledged his use of sources (Luke 1:2), which he investigated thoroughly in order to compose an orderly account (Luke 1:3). Where it is possible to verify Luke's use of sources, we find that the Gospel writer followed them meticulously. Furthermore, Luke was precise concerning the titles of officials and municipalities in various towns (Acts 13:12; 17:6; 18:12; 19:31,35), details that reveal the author's commitment to accuracy.

Source: New International Version Archaeological Study Bible