

NICK GUY & THE SEARCH FOR LUKE AFFAIR

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THEME: Are the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts really the Word of God, or merely historical fiction written many years after they are reported to have been written?

THE ACCUSATION AGAINST LUKE: Luke wrote both the Book of Acts, and the Gospel that bears his name. Both of these works are important to the Christian faith. Not just because of their historical value in presenting the Person and work of Jesus Christ and the acts of His disciples after His ascension into heaven, but that they are revered as the very words of God.

Over the years, Luke's accuracy in both of these volumes has been challenged. His critics have stated that his works contains information that is incorrect. Now, it has been suggested in publication that Luke wrote his Gospel and the Book of Acts around A.D. 100 , and not as early as A.D. 62, as has always been believed. With this in mind, it has been further suggested that what he wrote is not a factual account of the life and work of Jesus and His disciples but nothing more than historical fiction. That is where an author writes a fictional story but uses actual people and events in history as characters and settings.

If this were true, the entire Christian belief system would be greatly discredited. Doubt would be cast upon the very foundations of our faith, including the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The faith of many would certainly be shaken.

INFO ON LUKE: Paul refers to Luke as the "beloved physician."

Eusebius, considered the father of church history, says, in the third book of his *Ecclesiastical History*, that Luke was "by race an Antiochian and a physician by profession."

Neither the Gospel of Luke nor the Book of Acts names its author. How do we know it was Luke who even wrote them?

Well, first of all, we know that the same author wrote both since both are addressed to a man named Theophilus. In fact, the Book of Acts makes mention of the Gospel.

Luke's authorship is affirmed by both external and internal evidence.

The external evidence is both early and unanimous.

We have evidence as early as the 2nd Century A.D. that Church tradition held that Luke was the writer of both Books.

Internal Evidence

Well, the Book of Acts, which primarily records the travels and acts of the Apostle Paul,

contains several sections where the story is narrated in the first person. Such as Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-21:18 and 27:1-28:16. This means that the author was with Paul during those times.

This would most likely make the author one of Paul's companions who would be listed in the letters he wrote during those periods.

Luke is listed in Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11 & Philemon 24.

We also have support for Luke being a writer.

Eusebius, again in his *Ecclesiastical History*

tells us that Paul was in the habit of referring to Luke's Gospel when he used the phrase "according to my gospel."

INFO ON JOSEPHUS: Josephus was a 1st-century Romano-Jewish historian, with special emphasis on the 1st century AD and the First Jewish–Roman War which resulted in the Destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

He was a Hellenistic Jew, which means, he believed that Judaism and Graeco-Roman thought were compatible.

His most important works were *The Jewish War*, written around 75 AD, which recounts the Jewish revolt against Roman occupation between 66 and 70 AD.

He also wrote a book called *Antiquities of the Jews* in about 94 AD.

This book, written for a Roman audience, recounts the history of the world from a Jewish perspective. These works provide valuable insight into 1st century Judaism and the background of Early Christianity.

Josephus came from a wealthy, aristocratic family, born and raised in Jerusalem

Through his father he was descended from a priestly order which was one of the twenty four-orders of Priests in the Temple in Jerusalem.

And a descendant of the High Priest Jonathon. Jonathon may have been Alexander Jannaeus, the High Priest and Hasmonean ruler who governed Judea from 103 BC-76 BC.

When he was in his early twenties he was sent to negotiate with Emperor Nero for the release of several Jewish priests. He later returned to Jerusalem and was drafted as a commander of the Galilean forces.

He fought the Romans in the First Jewish-Roman War of 66-73 as a military leader in Galilee.

There is one suspicious incident that happened during this time.

After the Jewish garrison of Yodfat fell under siege, the Romans invaded, and killed thousands.

Those who survived committed suicide.

According to Josephus, however, he found himself trapped in a cave with forty of his companions in July 67. When Josephus and his companions refused, Josephus suggested a method of collective suicide.

They drew lots and killed each other, one by one.

The only one to survive this was Josephus who surrendered to the Roman forces and became a prisoner.

There was no one left to contradict his story.

His explanation of his actions is somewhat unsatisfactory.

Why did he fail to commit suicide? And why, after his capture, did he accept the Roman patronage?

In 71, he arrived in Rome in the entourage of Titus.

He became a Roman citizen and a client of the ruling Flavian dynasty.

That is why many times you will see him referred to as Flavius Josephus.

In addition to Roman citizenship he was granted accommodation in conquered Judaea along with a pension.

It was in Rome, under Flavian patronage, that he wrote all of his known works.

The character of Josephus?

Historian E. Mary Smallwood.

(Josephus) was conceited, not only about his own learning but also about the opinions held of him as commander both by the Galileans and by the Romans; he was guilty of shocking duplicity at Jotapata, saving himself by sacrifice of his companions; he was too naive to see how he stood condemned out of his own mouth for his conduct, and yet no words were too harsh when he was blackening his opponents; and after landing, however involuntarily, in the Roman camp, he turned his captivity to his own advantage, and benefitted for the rest of his days from his change of side.

LUKE'S ACCURACY: At one time Luke was considered to be in error when referring to the Philippian rulers as *praetors*. But findings have shown that this title was used by magistrates of a Roman Colony.

In Acts 18:12 Luke refers to a man named Gallio by the title *procounsul*.

Pliny, a lawyer and magistrate of Rome, never referred to Gallio as a Proconsul in his writings.

Many have said that this proved that Luke must have written the Book of Acts much later and was not aware of Gallio's true position.

But the Delphi Inscription, which is dated at AD 52 gives a man named Lusius Junius Gallio, the title of proconsul of Achaia..."

This verifies Luke's use of the title as correct.

Proving his accuracy.

But it also goes further.

Gallio only held this position for one year. If Luke had written later, he, like Pliny, would probably have overlooked this fact.

This gives support to the claim that Luke had written his Gospel and the Book of Acts at an earlier, as opposed to a later, date..

In Acts 28:7, Luke refers to Publius, the chief man in Malta, by the title of "Leading Man of the Island."

Inscriptions have been found giving him the title of "First man."

Acts 17:6 contains a similar evidence.

Luke here refers to the civil authorities of Thessalonica as *politarchs*.

This title is not found in classical literature, so Luke was assumed to be wrong.

But, some 19 inscriptions have been found that use that same title, five of them in reference to the leaders of Thessalonica.

Here's something from the Gospel of Luke 3:1.

Luke refers to Lysanias the Tetrarch of Abilene at the beginning of the ministry of John the Baptist, which would have been around 27 AD.

There was only one Lysanias known to historians, and he was killed in 36 BC.

But an inscription was found near Damascus which speaks of the "Freedman of Lysanias the Tetrarch" and is dated between 14 and 29 AD.

In Acts 14:6 Luke implies that the cities of Lystra and Derbe were in Lycaonia and that Iconium wasn't. This was considered an error based on the writings of men like Cicero who indicated that Iconium was in Lycaonia.

But, archeologist Sir William Ramsay found a monument that showed Iconium to be a Phygian city. This was confirmed by later discoveries.

Sir William Ramsay was a 19th century archaeologist and geographer.

He has been recognized as an authority on the districts where Paul traveled and much of the Book of Acts takes place.

After 30 years of study this is what he had to say concerning Luke as an historian:

"Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy...this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians. Luke's history is unsurpassed in respect of its trustworthiness."

JOSEPHUS' INACCURACIES: In the Preface section 3 of his *Antiquities of the Jews*, Josephus wrote: "For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another, [as the Greeks have,] but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine."

These 22 books that he was referring to is what we know as the Old Testament.

It stands, therefore, that he used Scripture as a source of information, yet there are numerous times where his chronology is at odds with it.

For instance, he claims that the Old Testament contains 5,000 years of history. In this he is inaccurate by about 1,000 years.

There are many conflicting dates Josephus gives in the genealogies.

He wrote that Adam was 230 years old when his son Seth was born, but Genesis 5:3 places Adam 130.

He wrote that Seth was 205 years old when his son Enos was born. But Genesis 5:6 records that he was 105.

And the list goes on and on.

It appears as if he is somewhat sloppy with his dates.

Some create real problems, according to Josephus, Methuselah delivered the government over to his son, Lamech, but, according to the dates he gives, this delivering would have taken place five years after Lamech died.

What is Josephus' track record when it comes to facts and events?
In *Antiquities* 1.13.2 he speaks of the temple as being built by king David, when we know that it was Solomon, and not David, who built the it.

Speaking of King David,
Josephus wrote that David had saved 10,000 talents of gold and 100,000 talents of silver to be used for the temple his son Solomon would build. I Chronicles 22:14 tells us that the amount was 100,000 talents of gold and 1,000,000 talents of silver.

Josephus also has the number of kings of Israel at 21.
But the Bible tells us there were 22.

He even contradicts himself.
Antiquities 17.11.4 says, "Now the tribute-money that came to Archelaus every year from his own dominions amounted to six hundred talents." But in *War of the Jews* 2.6.3 he sets the amount given to Archelaus as "four hundred talents".

His errors are attributed to license or copy errors.
But no such excuses need to be made for Luke.

No evidence exists to prove that Luke wrote at a later date and copied the work of Josephus.
Their track records are such that at those places where their accounts disagree the benefit of the doubt should go to Luke.

LUKE & THE CENSUS: In the 2nd chapter of his Gospel, Luke mentions the famous census that took place when Quirinius was Governor of Syria. He does this to explain why it was that Jesus came to be born in Bethlehem.

Josephus writes of the same census in his two volumes: *Jewish Wars* and *Jewish Antiquities*.

The Gospel of Matthew, which is the only other Gospel account that mentions the birth of Jesus does not mention the census.

We can assume that this element of the story did not come from any genuine tradition about Jesus' birth.

Since Josephus' account is much more detailed than Luke's the only logical conclusion that can be drawn is that Luke adopted it from Josephus.

First of all, just because the Gospel of Matthew doesn't mention the census does not mean Luke added it to the story.

If it was really the reason for Jesus being born in Bethlehem then its mention in the narrative wouldn't have to have been acquired nor adapted from Josephus.

But, in the Gospel of Luke, 2:1,2 we find this written:

“In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria.”

Josephus places the beginning of Quirinius' tenure as Governor in 6 AD. And this date is supported by various Roman historians.

Luke also tells us that Jesus was born while Herod the Great was in power.

Yet, Herod the Great died in 4 BC.

So Luke places the birth of Jesus in, at the earliest, 6 AD, which would be at least 9 years after Herod was dead.

Did Luke record an historical inaccuracy that is quite impossible to overcome?

SOLUTION: The passage in question reads: “This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria.” This does indeed refer to a census, but Luke's grammar may refer to a census that was taken before the famous one under Quirinius. The Greek word *protos* could mean “before” rather than “first.”

Verse 2 would then read like this:

“This was the registration before the one when Quirinius was Governor of Syria.”

Thus Luke would be clarifying that the census he is referring to came before the famous one.

Further strong evidence that acquits Luke of the charge of false information concerning the census.

Archeological discoveries have shown that the Romans had a regular enrollment of taxpayers and conducted a census every 14 years.

This began under Augustus and first took place as early as 23 BC.

There was also some information concerning the problem of the 9 years between the death of Herod and the ascension of Quirinius as governor of Syria.

And inscription was found in Antioch ascribing Quirinius to this post in 7 BC. It is now supposed that he was governor twice. Once in 7 BC and again in 6 AD.

THREE ASSASSINS: Luke, in the Book of Acts, mentions three Jewish rebel leaders. What is the likelihood that he would mention the same three Jewish rebel leaders that Josephus does, even though Josephus wrote that there were many such men.

One is given only the nick-name “The Egyptian” instead of an actual name.

Luke also associates the Egyptian with the *sicarii*. Sicarri means 'dagger-men' and is a term applied, in the decades just prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, to an extremist splinter group of the Jewish Zealots. They attempted to expel the Romans from Judea using concealed daggers.

Since this term does not appear in any earlier work than Josephus, he must have used it first and Luke must have copied him.

It seems obvious that Luke copied Josephus.

SOLUTION: Judas, Theudas & the Egyptian?

The reason for both mentioning the same three may be that these were the three most prominent.

Some claim that Luke's applying the term *sicarii* to the Egyptian is evidence that Luke copied Josephus. Believing that this term was not in use at the time of the Egyptian's rebellion.

There are scholars who claim that, although the *sicarii* group didn't exist at the time of the Egyptian's rebellion, it did at the time of Jesus.

Most importantly, it is vital to put Luke's writing in context.

In Acts 21:38 the Apostle Paul is being spoken to by a Roman tribune who asks Paul "Are you not the Egyptian, then, who recently stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the *sicarii* out into the wilderness?"

So Luke, in applying this term *sicarii* to the Egyptian was not stating a fact, but merely quoting someone else who may very easily have been in error.

A good question here is, why should we assume that Josephus is the accurate one? Especially since Josephus is regarded as less accurate in numbering the Egyptian's followers at 30,000, whereas Luke's puts them at 4,000.

RESOURCES: One of the best resources on this topic is Josh McDowell's *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*. He also deals a bit more in depth in his book *The Resurrection Factor*. www.josh.org or www.leestrobels.com