

## Saint Luke

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### Saint Luke

I decided to start with the writer known by many as Saint Luke, because that's where the archaeologists and historians seemed to start. Also, Luke wrote about one-quarter of the New Testament (the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts), so, for me, that was a big enough chunk of text to start testing the veracity of the entire New Testament.

Starting about 150 years ago, scholars in Europe started rejecting the historical records of Saint Luke. These academics declared that there was no evidence to support the existence of several locations and leaders mentioned in Luke's writings, and therefore, they rejected the entirety of his account. However, I discovered that archaeological finds during the last century have revealed that Luke was a very accurate historian and the two books he authored were absolutely authoritative records of history!

One of the greatest archaeologists of all time was Sir William Ramsay. He studied under the famous German historical schools in the mid-nineteenth century, which taught that the New Testament was a religious treatise written in the mid-200s AD, and not an historical document recorded in the first century. Ramsay was so convinced of this teaching that he entered the field of archaeology and went to Asia Minor to specifically find the physical evidence to refute Luke's biblical record. After years of field study, Ramsay completely reversed his entire view of the Bible and first century history. He wrote:

*Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy, he is possessed of the true historic sense...in short, this author should be placed along with the greatest of historians.*<sup>1</sup>

Luke's accuracy is demonstrated by the fact that he names key historical figures in the correct time sequence. He also uses the correct, and often obscure, government titles in various geographical areas, including the politarchs of Thessalonica, the temple wardens of Ephesus, the procouncil of Cyprus, and the "first man of the island" in Malta. In Luke's announcement of Jesus' public ministry, he mentions, "Lysanius tetrarch of Abilene". Scholars questioned Luke's credibility since the only Lysanius known for centuries was a leader of Chalcis who ruled from 40-36 BC. However, an inscription dated to the time of Tiberius (14-37 AD) was found, which records a temple dedication naming Lysanius as the "tetrarch of Abila" (Abilene near Damascus). This matched Luke's account and stunned the liberal scholarship of the day.<sup>2</sup>

In the Book of Acts, Paul was brought before Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia. Again, archaeology confirms this account. At Delphi, an inscription from Emperor Claudius was discovered that says, "Lucius Junius Gallio, my friend, and the proconsul of Achaia . . ." Historians date the inscription to 52 AD, which supports the time of Paul's visit there in 51 AD.<sup>3</sup>

Later in Acts, Erastus, a coworker of Paul, is appointed treasurer of Corinth. In 1928, archaeologists excavated a Corinthian theatre and discovered an inscription that reads, "Erastus in return for his aedilship laid the pavement at his own expense." The pavement was laid in 50 AD, and the term "aedile" refers to the designation of treasurer.<sup>4</sup>

In another passage, Luke gives Plubius, the chief man on the island of Malta, the title, "first man of the island." Scholars questioned this strange title and deemed it unhistorical. Inscriptions have recently been discovered on the island that indeed give Plubius the title of "first man."<sup>5</sup>

Elsewhere, Luke uses the Greek term "politarchs" ("rulers of the city") to refer to the leaders in Thessalonica. Although it sounds inconsequential, this was another hit against Luke's credibility for centuries, because no other Greek literature used this leadership term. However, approximately 20 inscriptions have now been discovered that bear the term

"politarch," including five finds that specifically refer to the ancient leadership in Thessalonica.<sup>6</sup>

As a final example, Saint Luke calls Iconium a city in Phrygia. Who cares? Well, this was also a major rub against the credibility of Luke for centuries. Scholars, going all the way back to writings from historians like Cicero, maintained that Iconium was in Lycaonia, not Phrygia. Therefore, scholars declared that the entire Book of Acts was unreliable. Guess what? In 1910, Ramsay was looking for the evidence to support this long-held claim against Luke and he uncovered a stone monument declaring that Iconium was indeed a city in Phrygia.<sup>7</sup> Many archaeological discoveries since 1910 have confirmed this - Luke was right!

When reviewing the research and writings of Saint Luke, Famous historian A.N. Sherwin-White declares:

*In all, Luke names thirty-two countries, fifty-four cities, and nine islands without error.*<sup>8</sup>

*For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming. . . . Any attempt to reject its basic historicity must now appear absurd.*<sup>9</sup>

### Keep Reading Now!

<sup>1</sup> Sir William M. Ramsey, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1915.

<sup>2</sup> Pat Zukeran, *Archaeology and the New Testament*, 2000, 4, <http://www.probe.org/docs/arch-nt.html>. Scripture citation: Luke 3:1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Scripture citation: Acts 18:12-17.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Scripture citation: Acts 19:22.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. Scripture citation: Acts 28:7.

<sup>6</sup> Eric Lyons, *Luke and the Term Politarchas*, Apologetic Press, 2002, <http://www.apologeticspress.org/rr/rr2002/res0204b.htm>. Scripture citation: Acts 17:6.

<sup>7</sup> "The Book of Acts," *New Testament Introductions*. The Blue Letter Bible. 2002-04. <http://www.blueletterbible.org/study/intros/acts.html>. Scripture citation: Acts 14:6.

<sup>8</sup> Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, Baker Books, 1999, 47.

<sup>9</sup> A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*, Clarendon Press, 1963, 189.

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