

When was the book of Acts written?

by Matt Slick <http://carm.org/when-was-acts-written>

The dating of the book of Acts is important because Acts was written after Luke. If Acts was written in, say, 60 A.D., this would mean the Gospel of Luke was written before that period and would add credence to the claim that the gospels were written early, close to the events, by the eyewitnesses.

So, I offer the following outline as evidence for acts being written before 70 A.D.

1. **Reasons for an early date, before 70 A.D and possibly no later than 62 A.D.**
 1. **Internal evidence that the writer was a companion of Paul**
 - a. The "we" passages: "[Acts 16:10-17](#); [20:5-15](#); [21:1-18](#); and [27:1-28:16](#). The author may, in these sections, be using a travel diary that he himself wrote at an earlier time, drawing on a diary written by a companion of Paul."¹
 2. **70 A.D. No mention of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem ([Luke 21:20](#)).**
 - a. The fall of Jerusalem in A.D 70 is hugely significant and Acts leaves you with the impression that the temple is still standing.
 - b. Luke did mention fulfilled prophecies, i.e., [Acts 11:28](#), "And one of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius." So, why not mention the destruction of Jerusalem as was prophesied? Wouldn't it have added to the validity of the [Christian](#) message?
 3. **64 A.D. No mention of the horrendous persecution of Nero in 64 A.D.**
 - a. Nero lived from A.D 37-68. He ruled from 54 to 68 A.D. and persecuted the Christians exceedingly around 64 A.D. when Rome suffered an immense fire. Therefore, the persecution had to occur during those years, yet there is no mention of this in Acts -- a book that records the history of the early Christian [church](#).
 - b. Luke recorded Christian Martyrs: Stephen in [Acts 7:55-60](#) and James in [Acts 12:2](#). Why not write about the martyrs of the Nero persecution as well -- if it happened before Acts was written?
 4. **64 A.D. No Roman persecution of the Church mentioned.**
 - a. "The local government at Ephesus is represented as distinctly helpful towards Paul and his companions, while the cause of persecution against the church is in every case the intrigues of the Jews. This is precisely what might be expected before Nero's persecution in A.D. 64."²
 5. **62 A.D. No mention of the death of the apostle Paul.**
 - a. The death of the apostle Paul is dated from anywhere between 62 AD to 68.³ [Acts 28:30-31](#) tells us that Paul was under arrest for two years but fails to mention his execution. Why, if it was written after his execution?
 - b. "The time of the writing of this history may be gathered from the fact that the narrative extends down to the close of the second year of Paul's first imprisonment at Rome. It could not therefore have been written earlier than A.D. 61 or 62, nor later than about the end of A.D. 63. Paul was probably put to death during his second imprisonment, about A.D. 64, or, as some think, 66."⁴
 6. **62 A.D. No mention of the death of the apostle James**
 - a. James was a very important figure in the early church who was martyred around 62 A.D. Why no mention of his death if Acts was written after 70. A.D. and it was Luke's procedure to record the deaths of martyrs ([Acts 7:55-60](#); [12:2](#))? The James spoken of here is not James the brother of John who was recorded as being executed in [Acts 12:1-2](#). This is the James spoken of in [Acts 15:13ff](#) who is also mention in [Gal. 1:19](#) as an [apostle](#), the Lord's brother.

Objections answered

1. **Acts shows influence of Josephus within its text which means it was written in the 90's, since that is when Josephus wrote.**
 1. But, it could be that Josephus, who published his work Antiquities in 93 A.D, used Luke as a reference.
 2. It is possible that both Josephus and Luke used a common source.
 3. If Luke cited Josephus, then why do they disagree on so many other points such as "the story of the Egyptian insurrectionist ([Ac. 21:38](#)) and Herod's death ([Ac.12:21ff](#), Ant. 19.8.2)."5
2. **Luke used the Gospel of Mark which is dated around 60 to 65 A.D.**
 1. This makes an assumption that Mark was written at a late date. It also assumes that Luke used Mark. It may be, but if Mark was written early, there is no problem at all.
 2. If the dating of Mark is before 65 A.D., and if Luke used Mark, and since both failed to mention the destruction of the Jewish Temple of 70 A.D., then it would seem logical to conclude that they were both written before 70 A.D.
3. **Modern Scholars affirm a date of authorship after 70 A.D., some even after 100 A.D.**
 1. There are scholars who affirm late dates as well as early dates. Scholars are not all in agreement nor are they without their prejudices and agendas that govern how they interpret data. As more and more people become antagonistic to the Gospel, we must expect that so-called scholars who openly deny the miraculous, will conclude that Acts was written late. But since the debate rages on, it is best to look at the internal evidence, as done above, to see what best fits the evidence.
 2. If someone said that a majority of the scholars affirm a late date, then this is argumentum ad populum; the majority believe it, so it must be true. One cannot discount outright that many scholars affirm a late date, but neither can one discount that many affirm an early date.