

# The Third Book

Rachel Hackenberg

*In the first book, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught—from the beginning until the day Jesus was taken into heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to his appointed messengers. - Acts 1:1-2*

The Book of Acts is the second book written by the author we know as Luke, a Jesus-adherent and colleague of Paul. Luke's first book was the oh-so-originally titled Gospel of Luke.

Writing a second book can be challenging for an author. You want to prove that the first book wasn't a fluke, a flash in the pan. You want to demonstrate that you have more to say—and that you can do so without parroting your first book while also not venturing so far into new content that your first book's fans are lost or disappointed.

Luke hits upon the secret formula for second books: He treats his first book as an unfinished story.

Given the confidence with which Luke wrote his first book, calling it a "thorough investigation" and an "accurate account," it's a bold choice with his second book to concede that the first one wasn't, in fact, thorough. That the story he told wasn't complete. That readers should retroactively allow for an ellipsis at the end of the Gospel of Luke.

That there's more to say, to observe, to share, to remember.



And he's right—about books and about faith. There's always more to consider, more to observe, more to marvel over, more to share aloud, more to remember together. It's why second books are written, third and fourth books too. It's why faith formation doesn't end with baptism or confirmation. It's why a canon is never closed, no matter who says otherwise.

The story is always ongoing. The revelation continues. The work of faith is the wondering labor of the next book, the next chapter, the next proclamation. The Book of Acts was just as unfinished as the Gospel of Luke. There's a third volume being written—and you are one of its authors.

Prayer: Let me never believe that the story is finished, Jesus—not my story, not yours.

