

LUKE

Introduction

Author. The author's name does not occur in the work but much evidence points to Luke as the writer. That this book is a companion volume to the book of Acts is clear. The fact that the language, structure and address (to one Theophilus) are identical in both works points to the same author. In the book of Acts the author uses the pronoun "we" in certain sections (Acts 16:10-17 *et. al*), indicating that he accompanied Paul at certain times on the missionary journeys. By process of elimination, Luke must be the author. The only explicit statements about Luke in the new Testament are found in Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11 and Philemon 24.

Based upon the way in which Paul refers to Luke (being differentiated from certain Jews, Colossians 4:10-14), he was probably a Gentile. It is also evident that he was well educated in Greek culture, a physician by vocation and a companion of Paul at various times on his missionary journeys and imprisonments. He was a loyal friend who stood by Paul when all others had failed him (2 Timothy 4:11)

Date. The date and place of writing are impossible to determine with certainty. If Acts was written during Paul's first Roman imprisonment and Luke was completed before that some time, then a date between 58 and 60 A. D. would fit well.

Distinctives. The dissimilarities of Luke from the synoptics reveal his distinctive approach. More than any other gospel, Luke records the recognition of Gentiles as well as Jews in God's plan. Among other indications, His work is dedicated to a Gentile (1:3), he alone records Simeon's words that Jesus would be a *light for revelation to the Gentiles* (2:32), and his genealogy alone is traced all the way to the universal man, Adam (3:38). A particular emphasis upon prayer is also evident. Jesus, especially prays in this gospel more than any other (3:21; 4:42; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28; 11:1; 22:32). Joy at the announcement of the gospel is also a distinctive of Luke (1:14, 44, 47, 58; 2:10; 15:6, 10, 22; 24:52). Luke also shows a special interest for women, the poor and sinners. Mary's testimony (1:46-55) gives praise to God for his mercy to the humble and the poor. Instead of magi, Luke records the adoration of humble shepherds (2:8-20), and Jesus' own family brings the offering of the poor at his dedication at the temple (2:24).

Occasion. A stated purpose for the gospel is to instruct the person of Theophilus (1:4), and evidently those among whom the book would be circulated. Thus, although the book could serve evangelistic purposes, it seems as though it was intended to strengthen the faith of believers by providing a historical framework for their belief. These believers, however, were probably removed from the events of Jesus' life both geographically and chronologically. Luke seems to be writing

for the benefit of Gentiles to assure them that their place in the kingdom of God was based upon the teaching of Jesus. Based upon the probable date of the book and Luke's association with Paul, the book may well have filled the void of those Gentile converts from Paul's missionary journeys.

Message Statement. *The message and saving work of Jesus Christ, which bring joy, are available to all mankind who will believe, Gentile as well as Jew.*

Argument

- 1A PREFACE: THE METHOD AND PURPOSE OF WRITING 1:1-4
 Luke is very direct in his statement of purpose: that he intends his book to strengthen the faith of those who have believed. The name Theophilus (*one who loves God*) is Greek which serves to typify the emphasis of the book which is directed toward Gentile believers.
- 1B THE BIRTHS AND MATURATION OF BOTH JOHN AND JESUS 1:5--2:52
 This section parallels the births and boyhoods of John and Jesus. Jesus' receives more emphasis but shadows that of John's. In both sections (1B and 2B) the parents are introduced (cf. outline), an angel gives the announcement, a sign is given and a firstborn son is conceived. The story then outlines the birth of both boys and gives a brief history of their growth and preparation.
- 1B Announcement of the Birth of John 1:5-25
 At the announcement of John's conception, the angel makes a note that *He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth* (1:14), reflecting the theme that God's work of salvation is a source of joy to those who believe.
- 2B Announcement of the Birth of Jesus 1:26-56
 The highlight of this section seems to be Mary's response to the message of the angel. The song of Mary seems to serve a similar purpose to that of Hannah (1 Samuel 2:1-10) which, in a song of praise, sets the tone and theme for the book. Mary's emphasis is that God has fulfilled His promises to Israel and will bless those who are humble and fear him. This lays the foundation for the rest of the book which emphasizes God's blessing on those who have faith regardless of their social, financial, racial or religious standing.
- 3B The Birth and Boyhood of John 1:57-80
 In keeping with one of his major themes, Luke notes at the birth of John, the joy which the babe brings to the family and friends (1:58). As Zechariah prophesies at the birth his words are divided between the significance of his son John as the forerunner (1:76-79) and the Messiah whose coming he will herald (1:67-75). John then matured in the wilderness until the beginning of his ministry.
- 4B The Birth and Boyhood of Jesus 2:1-52
 Although somewhat parallel to the previous section concerning John, this section is understandably longer. In contrast to the Matthean account, Jesus is worshipped here by lowly shepherds. When he is presented at the Temple his parents offer the sacrifice of doves, which the poor could afford. While there, two people prophesy over him, an old man and an old widow. Luke's message, that God is near the humble and the outcast, is evident early on in his work. Jesus' true humanity is evident as Luke notes twice that the boy grew and was filled with wisdom (2:40, 52).
- Also of significance is Simeon's prophecy that this child would be *a light for revelation to the Gentiles* (1:32a). Luke wants to clarify early in his work that the place of the Gentile in God's program was included in the plan of God from eternity past and was not simply the result of the Jewish rejection, much less the idea of the apostle Paul.
- 1C JESUS' PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY 3:1--4:13
 These two chapters are not dissimilar from the synoptic accounts of Jesus' preparation, except in emphasis. Luke continues to include Gentiles and outcasts in the events which compose the Messiah's preparation.
- 1B The Ministry of the Forerunner 3:1-20
 Luke is careful to date the appearance of John in detail giving credence to his historical accuracy and thus contributing to his purpose of confirming the faith of the reader with reliable information about the Savior.

John's message is, again, similar to that recorded in the synoptics with the unique addition of the words, *And all mankind will see God's salvation* (3:6). Thus, even before the Messiah is introduced, his forerunner makes clear the universal nature of the gospel.

Rather than recording John's antagonism with the Pharisees here, Luke records his interaction with Roman (Gentile) soldiers and tax collectors (1:12-14) demonstrating not only the *availability* of the gospel early on to outsiders but also its *acceptance*!

- 2B The Anointing of Jesus at His Baptism 3:21-22
In his emphasis upon prayer, only Luke, among the synoptists, notes the fact that Jesus was praying at the baptism. This anointing of Jesus by the Holy Spirit empowers the Messianic work of Jesus.
- 3B The Heritage of Jesus 3:23-38
Unlike the other genealogies of Jesus, this one is traced all the way back to Adam. The teaching is clear, that Jesus is ultimately related to every man in the human race through Adam. His salvation is intended not just for descendants of Abraham but also for those of Adam. The order of the genealogy is also different from Matthew's moving in reverse order. The plan of the author seems to be to leave the reader with the contrast between the man Adam (3:38) and the Man, Jesus (4:1) at his temptation. As Adam failed in his test in the garden accompanied by every advantage, Jesus won his battle with Satan in the wilderness with every disadvantage.
- 4B The Initial Temptation of Jesus 4:1-13
This section is entitled the *initial* temptation of Jesus because Luke makes it clear that after this test was completed that the devil only *left him until an opportune time* (4:13). If Matthew's account of the three tests is chronological (cf. Matthew's τ ο τ ε in 4:5) then Luke switches the order of the last two temptations, presumably to emphasize his theme of Jesus' mission ending in Jerusalem (cf. 9:51).
- 1D JESUS' MINISTRY IN GALILEE 4:14--9:50
This section is basically preparatory in Luke's gospel before Jesus begins to set his face toward Jerusalem (9:51). The purpose of this section is to authenticate Jesus' ministry by his miracles, to show the beginning of his conflict with the leadership of the nation and to call his disciples who would follow him.
- 1B The Introduction to Jesus' Ministry 4:14-30
This short section sets the tone for Jesus' ministry. He returns to his home town of Nazareth and speaks in the synagogue. Although the people are outwardly cordial they are not about to accept Jesus for who he really is. Jesus thus announces his rejection of them with two historical allusions to the time when Israel, being unrepentant, forfeited her blessings to Gentiles. In the days of Elijah only a Gentile Sidonian widow and a Gentile Syrian leper received the blessings of God. Upon this announcement the people of Jesus' home town attempted to murder him.
- 2B The Authentication of Jesus' Ministry 4:31--5:26
Jesus' miracles serve to authenticate his message. This section records several of those miracles. He first exorcises a demon (4:31-37) and then heals many people (4:38-44). He then calls his first four disciples and authenticates his message with a miracle of catching fish (5:1-11). His last miracle in this section is the healing of a leper (5:12-16).
- 3B The Beginning of Controversy with the Pharisees 5:17--6:11
Soon after the rejection of Jesus at Nazareth Luke moves to the theme of rejection by the leadership. This section details four separate points of antagonism with Jesus by the leadership. They first question whether Jesus blasphemes over the healing of a paralytic (5:17-26), and then question his associations with Matthew, the despised tax collector (5:27-32). Finally, the Pharisees questioned him about fasting and his working and healing on the sabbath.
- 4B Jesus' Sermon on a Level Place 6:12-49
The sermon recorded here is a shorter version of the one found in Matthew 5-7. Evidently after Jesus went up the mountain to pray all night (6:12) and then came back down to a level place to heal diseases (6:17-19). Perhaps, following that, He went up higher to get away from the crowds in order to begin teaching his own (6:20). Then, later, as the multitudes gathered (7:1 says that these words were spoken in the hearing of the people) Jesus addressed his words to them as well (6:46-47).

Luke omits the portions which concern Matthew's Jewish audience. The sermon as presented in Luke has the same basic thrust, however, focusing upon the character of a true believer and the necessity of a change

- of character for entrance in to the kingdom.
- 5B Jesus' Ministry in Capernaum and Surrounding Cities 7:1--8:56
 Luke again mixes Jesus' teaching with His miracles, the latter confirming the validity of the former. He heals a Gentile's servant (7:1-10) and raises a widow's son (7:11-17). Throughout this section Jesus' mercy on the outcasts and the antagonism which the religious establishment demonstrates because of his chosen objects of mercy is evident (7:36-50).
- 6B Jesus' Teaching of the Twelve 9:1-50
 Sensing the rejection which is building Jesus begins to concentrate his efforts upon the Twelve. Jesus empowers them and sends them out as witnesses and then further challenges their faith by asking them to feed the five thousand (9:13). He then prepares them for his death by assuring them of his identity and giving them a preview of his coming glory (9:18-36). Upon returning from the mountain his disciples are unable to cast out an evil spirit so Jesus heals the boy and teaches the Twelve again about his death and true greatness (9:46-50).
- 1E JESUS' PROGRESS TOWARD JERUSALEM 9:51--19:10
 This section begins what seems to be, for Luke, the most important portion of Jesus ministry, his journey toward Jerusalem. As he records in 9:51, *As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem*. Although this is not Jesus' final journey to the city, Luke sees this as the beginning of the end thematically, the movement toward the climax. While *authentication* was a major concern in chapters four through nine, that is no longer an issue. At this point *acceptance* is crucial and, for the most part, is denied the Messiah by the nation. This major section can therefore be subdivided into two parts: The rejection of Jesus by most (10-11) and His teaching in light of the rejection (12-19).
- 1B The Rejection of Jesus by Most People on His Way to Jerusalem 9:51--11:54
 This division is framed by two stories of deliberate rejection: first by the Samaritans (9:51-56) and last by the blasphemy of the Spirit (11:14-54). The Samaritans could be expected to reject a Jewish Messiah on his way toward Jerusalem, yet the rejection does set the tone for the section. After his initial rejection by the Samaritans, Jesus begins to teach about the now high cost of discipleship (9:57-62).
- Although the seventy-two return with excitement over their success, Jesus recognizes that such responses may well be superficial and encourages his disciples to rejoice in their salvation rather than their success. The final and watershed rejection of Jesus in this section involves the blasphemy of the Spirit (11:14-54). When the leadership charges that Jesus' miracles are performed by the power of Satan they seal their fate. Jesus interprets this rejection as final and withholds further signs from the generation (11:29-32). He then excoriates the leadership with the result that *they began to oppose him fiercely and to besiege him with questions, waiting to catch him in something he might say* (11:53).
- 2B Jesus' Teaching of His Followers in Light of the Rejection 12:1--19:27
 This section concerns Jesus' teaching in view of his rejection. It is framed by Jesus' instruction to those closest to him (12:1-53; 17:11--19:27) and also includes his instruction to the multitudes (13:1--17:10).
- 1C To His followers 12:1-53
 Jesus' first words to his own in this section concern warning about the Pharisees. He warns his own not to fear them which can only kill the body and to realize that the Holy Spirit would be their support in times of interrogation before authorities (12:1-12). He next warns them about the seduction of wealth (12:13-34) and encourages them to be ready for his return (12:35-48).
- 2C To the multitudes 12:54--13:21
 After Jesus spoke to his disciples his attention now turns to the multitudes (12:54). Jesus' basic counsel to the multitudes concerns their inattention to the offering of the kingdom and their need to repent. He also warns them about the Pharisees' failed leadership (13:10-17) and of the permeating influence of their false teaching (13:18-21).
- 3C To various people about the people of the kingdom 13:22--17:10
 Luke's basic point in this section concerns who *is* and who *is not* a member of the kingdom. Throughout these chapters the theme of entering into the kingdom is often signified by taking part in a feast or banquet (13:29; 14:7-24; 15:23; 17:7-10). He first discusses the terrible fate of most of the nation of Israel because they will not enter (13:22-35). Although he exhorts the nation to enter, he concludes that the nation was simply not willing (13:34).

Jesus next spends time at the house of a Pharisee which serves as the occasion of his mercy to one suffering from dropsy. At the same banquet Jesus speaks a parable which reverses the presumed order of entrance into the kingdom.

The trilogy of stories in Luke 15 exemplifies Luke's theme and serve as one parable (notice the singular, 15:3) and answer the objections of the Pharisees about Jesus' associations with sinners. After each of the lost articles is found (sheep, 15:6; silver, 15:9; and a son, 15:24) great rejoicing followed except in the last story. Instead of rejoicing, a brother, who should have been glad was angry. The natural rejoicing found in the first two stories serves as a foil for the anger of the brother. His selfish displeasure causes him to miss the banqueting with the father which will also be the fate of the Pharisees if they do not repent.

Jesus next warns his followers about the dangers of money (16:1-31) and of their responsibilities toward God (17:1-10).

- 4C To His followers 17:11--19:27
This section, once again, seems to be directed toward Jesus' own disciples. Specifically, it speaks to their attitudes in light of the rejection. Jesus encourages them to be grateful (17:11-19), to be ready for the coming of the kingdom (17:20-37), to be persistent and humble in prayer (18:1-14) and to have trust in their heavenly father as do children (18:15-17). Jesus also demonstrates mercy to a tax collector who is grateful and promises to pay back four times the amount which he stole (19:8). The section closes with a parable of ten minas (19:11-27) which summarizes the teaching of the twelve (4C) but also the teaching for the nation. It teaches that each disciple has responsibilities (as outlined in this section from 17:11--19:10) to perform and that he must do them to the best of his ability. It also teaches that those who reject the lordship of the Messiah will be taken away and will not enjoy kingdom blessing.
- 1F THE MINISTRY OF JESUS IN JERUSALEM 19:28--21:38
Jesus' goal was to go to Jerusalem to present himself as Messiah there to the leadership. This section records that presentation and the awful rejection which it elicited.
- 1B Jesus' Presentation to Jerusalem as Messiah 19:28-44
Although the crowds superficially accepted Jesus' entrance at the beginning of the passion week (19:35-38), the leadership clearly repudiated his claims (19:39-40). This resulted in Jesus' sad pronouncement of his rejection of the nation (19:41-44).
- 2B Jesus' Possession of the Temple in Jerusalem as Messiah 19:45--21:4
Jesus controls the Temple for Monday and Tuesday and by so doing infuriates the Sadducean leadership. He first drove out the money changers (19:45-48) and then found himself in conflict with the chief priests (20:1-26). After their failure to silence or trap Jesus, the Sadducees also attempted to bait Jesus (20:27-47), but their efforts were met with severe rebuke (20:45-47).
- 3B Jesus' Teaching About Jerusalem in Light of His Rejection as Messiah 21:5-38
After Jesus' rejection by the city, the question is raised about the fate of Jerusalem. Jesus answers that question by tracing the fate of the city of Jerusalem through the tribulation period. He outlines the future of the city in the first half, the midpoint and the end of the tribulation period and gives warnings in light of that time.
- 4B Summary of Jesus' Teaching at the Temple 21:37-38
For the sake of safety Jesus spent his evenings outside of the city on the Mount of Olives. Thus, Judas was able to eventually find him on the Passover night.
- 1G THE PASSION AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS 22:1--24:53
Luke brings out the high point of Jesus' rejection by the nation and also his triumph in resurrection. His triumph is the source of salvation and joy for all men. More than any other gospel writer Luke emphasizes the innocence of Jesus. He records Pilate's threefold declaration of innocence (23:4, 14, 22); the declaration by the thief (23:39-43); the centurion (23:47); and certain witnesses of the crucifixion (23:48).
- 1B The Last Supper 22:1-38
The instructions given to the Peter and John about securing the place of the Passover insure secrecy of the spot from Judas. Jesus prepared his own for their future roles of leadership as well.

- 2B Jesus' Arrest and Trials 22:39--23:25
Luke is careful to record at least references to four of the six trials which Jesus endured. In each of them he is seen to be innocent. Pilate, the Roman official, suggests his release at least three times (23:13-25) and only consents to his crucifixion at the insistence of the mob (23:23).
- 3B Jesus' Crucifixion 23:26-56
True to his theme, Luke records Jesus' interaction with, and the salvation of, a thief on the cross. He is also mocked by many, but many others witness his death and testify to his righteous character.
- 4B Jesus' Resurrection and Appearances of Jesus 24:1-53
This final section records the eyewitness experiences of many who saw the risen Lord. In each case the people were discouraged because of Jesus' death but were encouraged and joyful after hearing the news of his resurrection. In keeping with his theme, the gospel brings joy to the believing hearer. The resurrection is the supreme testimony and witness to the Father's acceptance of the atoning work of Calvary. The historical fact of the substitutionary atonement is proven by the witnesses here. The book ends with Jesus ascension and his command to remain in the city of Jerusalem to await further power from on high (24:48).

