

Introduction to Luke

Lecture by Steve Gregg

I. Authorship:

- Indisputably same author as of Acts (Acts 1:1); universally accepted to be Luke, the physician
- Irenaeus (170); Clement of Alexandria (195) & Tertullian (215), all quote extensively from this book and attribute it to Luke, as does the Muratorian Fragment (170)
- Author was a companion of Paul, who was with him in Rome (Acts 16:10-17; 20:5—21:18; 27:1—28:16)
- Timothy, Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Tychichus, Trophimus, Silas ruled out (by being named in Acts)
- Luke was with Paul in Rome (Col.4:14/ 2 Tim.4:1 I/ Philem.24)
- Luke was a physician (Col.4:14); Luke/Acts contain more than 400 words known from Greek medical texts
- Luke is essentially unknown, apart from his writings. If he were not the true author, no one would have attributed them to such an otherwise unimportant person.

II. Value of Luke-Acts:

- Luke is the first “church historian,” as opposed to an evangelist (writers of the other gospels). He connects the stories chronologically with relation to secular historical personages
- Between them, these two books comprise about one-fourth of the New Testament; more than that written by any other NT author (unless Paul wrote Hebrews).
- Luke’s writings are the only NT writings not written from a Jewish perspective (Luke was Gentile [Col.4:11,14]).
- Luke’s gospel collects the memoirs of many witnesses, unlike the other gospels, which preserve the witness of individual apostles (Matthew, Peter [Mark], and John).
- Acts connects the Christianity of the gospels with that of the epistles; introduces Paul, etc.
- As Mark preserves the gospel as preached by Peter, Luke was regarded to be the “Pauline” gospel:

“Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the gospel preached by him”

—Irenaeus (*Against Heresies*, III, i, 1).

“For even Luke’s form of the gospel men usually ascribe to Paul”

—Tertullian (*Against Marcion*, IV:v).

III. Purpose:

- To document the facts of the origin and growth of Christianity for Theophilus?
- Some think, to vindicate Paul in the eyes of those prosecuting him?
- To fill a gap in existing Christian literature, and, perhaps, to fulfill an urge to write a history?

IV. Circumstances of writing:

- Who was Theophilus? Every Christian? A common Greek name at that time. A Roman official (“most excellent”)? A rich patron, sponsoring the work?
- Written from where? In Caesarea, during Paul’s two-year imprisonment? Later, in Rome?
- Date of writing: AD 59-60 is good approximation.
 - a. Prior to Acts, which was probably AD 61 or 62.
 - b. Possibly even prior to Mark, since some manuscripts, as well as Clement and Origen list Luke as the second gospel (after Matthew; before Mark)

V. Special Contents:

- Begins story earlier than other gospels: Announcements of the birth of John & Jesus
- Tells birth narratives from Mary’s point of view (Matthew gives Joseph’s)
- Gives genealogy (different from Matthew’s), back to Adam
- Begins with John’s baptism (more detail than others), baptism and temptation of Christ
- Begins Christ’s ministry where Matthew and Mark do, with Galilean campaign
- Has Christ preach (and almost die) in Nazareth before Capernaum
- Luke alone tells of widow’s son at Nain (7:11-17) & the forgiven sinful woman (7:36-50)
- Includes a unique long passage (9:51—18:14) and a briefer passage (19:1-28) (containing 16 of the 23 parables in Luke, as well as some of the most interesting events)
- Luke alone records Jesus’ trial before Herod (23:6-12)
- Appearance to two men of Emmaus unique to Luke (24:13-35) and Mark’s “long ending”
- Different great commission than that of Matthew, Mark or even Acts (Luke 24:44-49)
- Christ’s ascension mentioned only by Luke (24:50-43/Acts 1:9-12) and Mark’s “long ending”

VI. Characteristics:

- A. The most literary gospel: more cultured Greek than any other book in the NT (except Hebrews)
- B. The most “historical” gospel —connecting events to contemporary secular history (e.g., 3:1-2)
- C. The gospel of the inclusive kingdom; mercy extended to:
 - Jews*— salvation of Israel (**1:68-73; 2:29-32**)¹
 - Gentiles*—light to Gentiles (**2:32**); enlightened centurions (7:2ff; 23:47/ Acts 10)
 - Samaritans*—inhospital village (**9:51-56**); Good Samaritan (**10:33**), Samaritan leper (**17:16**)
 - Sinners* —sinful woman (**7:37-50**); prodigal son (**15:1-2,11-32**)
 - Publicans* —Levi (Matthew); praying publican in temple (**18:10-14**); Zacchaeus (**19:1-10**)
 - The rich and powerful* —Theophilus (**1:3**), young ruler (18:18-30)
 - Poor* —good news to the poor (**4:18**); “Blessed are you poor (**6:20**); beggar Lazarus (**16:19ff**)

¹ **Bold-face type** where not paralleled in Matthew and Mark

Children—Blessing the children (18:15-17)

Women—Elisabeth & Mary (**ch.1**), Anna (**2:36ff**), Widow of Nain (**7:11-15**); Mary of Bethany (**10:41f**);
crippled woman (**13:10-17**); women at the tomb (23:55-56; 24:1-10)

Elderly—Simeon, Anna (**chapter 2**)

D. The gospel of the Holy Spirit—more refs to Holy Spirit (17) than Matthew (12); Mark (6)

1. In the life and activities of Jesus (**1:35**; 3:22; **4:1a, 14, 18**; **10:21**)

2. In the teaching of Jesus (**11:13**; 12:10,12)

E. The gospel of prayer—more emphasis on prayer (esp. Jesus praying) than other Synoptics:

1. General references to people praying (**1:10,13**; **2:37**; **5:33**)

2. The prayer-life of Jesus—**3:21** (*while baptized*); **5:16** (*withdrawal*); **6:12** (*before choosing the twelve*); **9:18** (*at Caesarea Philippi*); **9:28-29** (*transfiguration*); **11:1** (*occasion of disciples asking for instruction in prayer*); 22:41,44-45)

3. Jesus teaches on or exhorts to prayer (6:28; 11:2ff; 18:lfr, 10-11; 19:46; 20:47; 21:36; 22:40,46)

VII. Divisions of the Book:

A. Prologue (1:1-4)

B. Birth narratives (1:5—chapter 2)

C. Preparation for ministry (3:1—4:13)

D. Galilean ministry (4:14—9:50)

E. Luke's "Travel Narrative": Judean and Perea ministry (9:51—19:28)

F. Passion (19:28—chapter 23)

G. Resurrection & appearances (chapter 24)