

Luke - Introduction & Background

Authorship

External evidence favors Lucan authorship. External sources of information include Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Jerome, Eusebius, and the Muratorian Canon. Moreover, the superscription “according to Luke” appears in some of the earliest manuscripts. Because Luke was not an apostle or an eyewitness to the ministry of Christ, it is unlikely that such a tradition could have emerged if Luke were not the book’s author.

Although the book is anonymous, *internal* evidence also favors Lucan authorship. It is likely that the person who wrote Acts is also the same person who wrote Luke. Both works are addressed to Theophilus (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1). Both books emphasize Gentiles, women, and the Holy Spirit. Both exhibit a similarity of vocabulary, language, and style. Acts seems to pick up where Luke left off. Also, the “we sections” in Acts (16:10-40; 20:5—21:18; 27:1—28:16) indicate the writer’s personal involvement with Paul. Thus, the writer accompanied Paul to prison. Of all those affiliated with Paul in his first Roman imprisonment according to the prison letters, Luke is the most likely candidate for authoring Acts. Other internal arguments favoring Lucan authorship of the Gospel of Luke include the fact that the literary ability of its writer demanded that of an educated person. Luke certainly fits this description given his background as a physician (Col 4:14). Also, some of the book’s events seem to be narrated from the perspective of a doctor (Mark 5:25-26; Luke 18:43; 22:44). Luke’s *biography* indicates that he belonged to the medical profession. This observation is born out not only by Scripture (Col 4:14) but also from the Muratorian Canon. Most believe that Luke was a Gentile for the following reasons. First, when listing his friends who were Jews (Col 4:11), Paul seems to exclude Luke (Col 4:14). Second, Luke describes Aramaic as “their tongue” rather than “our tongue” (Acts 1:19). Third, the name “Luke” may be an abbreviated form of the Latin name Lucius. Fourth, Luke’s skill with Greek may reveal his Gentile heritage. Fifth, in the NT world, it was common for Gentile slaves to serve as physicians. If this hypothesis regarding Luke’s ethnicity is correct, then Luke was the only Gentile author of Scripture.

Acts’ “we sections” (16:10-40; 20:5—21:18; 27:1—28:16) indicate that Luke at times accompanied Paul on his various travels and was also with Paul during his first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28:14-31; Col 4:14; Philemon 24). Luke also most likely accompanied Paul during his ministry between imprisonments as well as during the second imprisonment (2 Tim 4:11). Luke was not an eyewitness to Christ’s life and ministry (1:2). His name is not found on any of the NT apostolic lists. Tradition is divided concerning Luke’s death. Some tradition indicates that he died a martyr’s death. Other tradition indicates that he remained

in Syrian Antioch and lived the rest of his life as an unmarried man until his death of natural causes in 84 AD.

Date

Many date Luke after 70 AD based upon the assumption that the destruction of Jerusalem spoken of in Luke 21:20-24 represents history recorded after the fact. However, this assumption is built upon an anti supernatural presupposition that denies predictive prophecy rather than sound scholarship. Had Luke written his Gospel after 70 AD, he probably would have noted how Christ's prophecy regarding Jerusalem had been fulfilled since Luke noted how Scripture was fulfilled elsewhere (3:4). Furthermore, why would Luke record the history of Jerusalem in 70 AD while at the same time fail to note the deaths of Peter and Paul who had died just prior to 70 AD? Luke must have been written prior to 62 AD since it is unlikely that Acts was written after this date. Acts ends abruptly with Paul still in prison and without any notification of the outcome of his trial before Caesar. Because Luke is the prequel to Acts, Luke must have been written prior to this date as well. If Luke wrote his Gospel during Paul's first Roman imprisonment, then the book's date is probably 60 AD. However, if Luke wrote Acts during Paul's Caesarean imprisonment, then a date of 57–59 AD seems appropriate.

Place of Writing

Multiple suggestions exist regarding the location of the writing of Luke's Gospel. Arabia, Alexandria, and Asia Minor are among the suggestions. However, the two most popular suggestions include Caesarea and Rome. If Luke accompanied Paul during the apostle's Caesarean imprisonment, this would have been a convenient time for Luke to compose his Gospel. Also, because Luke was with Paul during the apostle's first Roman imprisonment, he may have written his book during the early months of this imprisonment. Some have suggested that because Luke accompanied Paul during the apostle's journey to Rome (27:1—28:16), Luke composed this gospel during this journey. In sum, it is best to say that Luke's Gospel was either written from Caesarea or Rome.

Recipient(s)

Luke's Gospel is addressed to Theophilus (1:3). His name means "loved by God" or "lover of God." Because of the meaning of his name, some have suggested that Theophilus is symbolic either for Paul or for a larger Christian audience. However, why would Paul need certainty in what he has believed (1:4)? Also, why write the book to a person possessing a particular name if it was only intended for a general audience? Although it is likely that Luke was written for a general audience in addition to Theophilus, it must be remembered that Theophilus is the book's primary addressee. Little is known of Theophilus. However, his title "most excellent" reveals two important facts about him. First, this title indicates that he was a Gentile since Luke uses the same title for other Gentile rulers (Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:25). Second, because Luke uses this same title for other rulers, it is likely that

Theophilus enjoyed some kind of elevated social status. Theophilus was also likely a believer since Luke's goal in writing to him was to cause him to become more certain of the things he has already believed (1:4).

Other factors indicate that Luke's Gospel was written to a Gentile audience. First, the book omits Semitic terms as well as the use of various Jewish names and places. For example, the word "hosanna" is omitted. Moreover, the Greek word *didaskalos* is used for "teacher" rather than the Jewish word "rabbi." Second, the names of various Jewish places are explained (4:31; 8:26; 21:37; 23:51; 24:13). Third, Luke refers to Roman emperors when giving critical dates involving Christ's birth (2:1-2) and John the Baptist's ministry (3:1). Fourth, when citing the OT, Luke typically quotes the LXX. Fifth, Luke's Gospel contains scant OT citations. Sixth, Luke places a minimal emphasis upon Christ fulfilling OT prophecy. Seventh, unlike Matthew who traces Christ's lineage back to Abraham (Matt 1:1-17), Luke traces Christ's lineage back to Adam (3:23-38).

Purpose and Message

Luke wrote for the *purpose* of establishing and assuring (1:4) Theophilus in his Christian faith by giving him a comprehensive and historical account of Christ's ministry as the Son of Man. Such a correct representation was necessary given the advent of the false Christologies of Stoicism and Epicureanism in the early church. The prologue of Luke's Gospel (1:1-4) seems to indicate that Theophilus had already received some kind of oral Christian instruction. Luke's goal was to continue this instruction by presenting Theophilus with a complete Gospel. Thus, the Gospel was written for purposes of edification rather than evangelism. The *message* of Luke is that Christ is the perfectly human and divine savior who, as the rightful heir to Israel's covenants, was unjustly rejected by the nation. However, this rejection enabled Him to become the universal savior of all people, including those least considered "savable" (19:10). Christ calls those who respond to Him to become His disciples.

Sources and Method

Although Luke was not an apostle or an eyewitness (1:2), he still had pertinent sources to draw upon as he compiled his material. For example, Luke mentions writings that were already in circulation concerning Christ's life (1:1). These early writings may refer to uninspired biographies of Christ or inspired writings written earlier than Luke such as Matthew. Another source of information that Luke used was eyewitnesses of Christ's life and ministry. Such eyewitnesses may have included Mary, who kept the events of Christ's life concealed in her heart (1:29; 2:19,33,51) and no doubt revealed them at the proper time. Other possible sources of eyewitness testimony could have been the seventy (10:1), the women who supported Christ's ministry (8:2-3), the Jerusalem apostles that Luke may have met during Paul's caesarean imprisonment, and Mnason (Acts 21:16).

Luke also had access to others who in turn had access to eyewitnesses. For example, Luke may have received information from Mark since the two of them were together during Paul's first imprisonment (Col 4:10,14; Philemon 24). Luke also had access to Paul (2 Tim 4:11) who enjoyed direct revelation from God. As Luke drew from this vast reservoir of information, he selected (John 20:31; 21:25) and arranged material under the Holy Spirit's guidance in order to accomplish his purpose in writing. Some have speculated that because Luke 1:3 uses the phrase "from above" (*anōthen*) and because this same phrase is used elsewhere in reference to receiving something from heaven (John 3:3,31; 19:11; James 1:17; 3:15,17), Luke received his content from direct revelation rather than from consulting original sources. However, this position is unlikely since Luke used the same word (*anōthen*) with the meaning "from the beginning" elsewhere (Acts 26:5).

Structure

Luke's Gospel follows a fourfold structure. First, Luke introduces Christ (1:1—4:13). Second, Luke records the events of Christ's ministry, which took place in and around Galilee (4:14—9:50). Third, Luke records the ongoing rejection of Christ and the parables that Christ taught His disciples in view of that rejection. This section of his gospel is known as the "travelogue" and took place during Christ's journey to Jerusalem (9:51—19:27). The fourth section of the book records Christ's formal rejection by the nation, crucifixion, and resurrection (19:28—24:53).

Unique Characteristics

Luke's Gospel boasts several outstanding characteristics. First, in comparison to the other synoptics, Luke contains the most unique material. While 50% of Luke is unique, only 40% of Matthew and 10% of Mark are unique. Examples of Luke's unique material include Christ's birth and childhood narratives, the events surrounding the birth of John the Baptist, and the "travelogue" (9:51—19:27). Second, Luke is a long book. In fact, Luke–Acts comprises 28% of the NT. Luke wrote 2138 verses in comparison to Paul's 2033 verses. Third, in comparison to the other gospels, Luke is the most comprehensive. It probably contains more factual information about Christ than any other Gospel. Fourth, Luke evidences great precision in terms of dating (2:1-2; 3:1-2).

Fifth, Luke interacts with secular history (2:1-2; 3:1-2). Sixth, the church owes some of its most precious hymns to Luke's Gospel. Examples include the Song of Elizabeth (1:39-45), *Magnificat* (1:46-55), *Benedictus* (1:67-79), *Gloria in Excelsis* (2:13-14), and *Nunc Dimittis* (2:28-32). Seventh, Luke places a special emphasis upon the universal appeal of the gospel. The gospel is available to everyone, including those thought least worthy. Eighth, Luke's Gospel elevates women. While it contains 43 references to women, Matthew and Mark only mention women 49x total.

Ninth, Luke focuses upon people who either are not mentioned in the other Gospels or are given limited attention elsewhere. Examples include Zecharias, Elizabeth, Simeon, Anna,

Zacchaeus, Cleopas, the Emmaus disciples, and the widow of Nain. Tenth, Luke emphasizes the character of the various entities portrayed in Christ's parables. Examples include the Good Samaritan (10:30-37), the rebellious and self-righteous son (15:11-32), the shrewd steward (16:1-13), and the arrogant religious leader and humble sinner (18:9-14). Eleventh, Luke emphasizes prayer not only in the life of Christ but in the lives of other individuals as well. Twelfth, the Spirit is also emphasized in the life of Christ and in the lives of others.

Thirteenth, Luke emphasizes forgiveness (3:3; 5:18-26; 6:37; 7:36-50; 11:4; 12:10; 17:3-4; 23:34; 24:27). Fourteenth, Luke emphasizes joy (1:14; 8:13; 10:17; 13:17; 15:5,9,32; 19:6,37). Fifteenth, Luke places some stress on Christ's miracles. Of 20 of Christ's miracles recorded by Luke, six of these are unique to his Gospel. Sixteenth, Luke places great emphasis upon Christ's parables. Of the 22 parables that Luke records, 18 are unique to His Gospel. Most of the parables are found in the "travelogue" (9:51-19:27).

Seventeenth, Luke makes repeated reference to the temple (1:8,21-22; 2:27,37,41-51; 24:53). Eighteenth, Luke mentions angels over 20x. Nineteenth, Luke focuses upon Christ's attitude toward and ministry to children. Twentieth, Luke emphasizes Christ's work of redemption (22:37; 24:27,44,46). Twenty-first, Luke's Gospel can be organized according to geographical divisions. Twenty-second, Luke demonstrates great skill in the Greek language. Twenty-third, Luke's vocabulary and expressions show his work to be a literary masterpiece.

Outline

I. Introduction to the Son of Man (Luke 1:1-2:52)

- (1) Prologue (1:1-4)
- (2) Announcement of John's birth (1:5-25)
- (3) Announcement of Jesus' birth (1:26-38)
- (4) Mary visits Elizabeth (1:39-56)
 - (A) Elizabeth praises the fruit of Mary's womb (1:39-45)
 - (B) Mary praises God (1:46-56)
- (5) Birth of John (1:57-80)
 - (A) Circumstances of the birth (1:57-66)
 - (B) Zacharias praises God (1:67-80)
- (6) Birth of Jesus (2:1-38)
 - (A) Circumstances of the birth (2:1-7)
 - (B) Worship of the shepherds (2:8-20)
 - (C) Christ's circumcision (2:21-24)
 - (D) Praises for the birth (2:25-38)
 - (a) By Simeon (2:25-35)
 - (b) By Anna (2:36-38)

(7) Childhood of Jesus (2:39-52)

II. Preparation of the Son of Man (Luke 3:1—4:13)

(1) Ministry of John (3:1-20)

(2) Jesus' baptism (3:21-22)

(3) Jesus' genealogy (3:23-38)

(4) Jesus' temptation (4:1-13)

III. Galilean ministry of the Son of Man (Luke 4:14—9:50)

(1) Preaching in the Nazareth synagogue (4:14-30)

(2) Initial Ministry (4:31—5:16)

(A) Christ casts out demons (4:31-37)

(B) Casting out fever from Peter's mother-in-law (4:38-39)

(C) Christ heals many (4:40-44)

(D) Miraculous catch of the fish (5:1-11)

(E) Healing of the leper (5:12-16)

(3) Conflict (Luke 5:17—6:11)

(A) Forgiving sins (5:17-26)

(B) Fellowshiping with the sinners (5:27-32)

(C) Not fasting (5:33-39)

(D) Eating on the Sabbath (6:1-5)

(E) Healing on the Sabbath (6:6-11)

(4) Sermon on the plain (6:12-49)

(A) Preparation for the sermon (6:12-19)

(a) Selecting the disciples (6:12-16)

(b) Setting the stage for the sermon (6:17-19)

(B) Teaching the beatitudes (6:20-49)

(5) Compassion (7:1-50)

(A) Healing the centurion's son (7:1-10)

(B) Raising the widow's son (7:11-17)

(C) Responding to John's doubts (7:18-35)

(D) Forgiving the sinful woman (7:36-50)

(6) Christ and His followers (8:1-19)

(A) Those who supported Christ (8:1-3)

(B) Christ gives the kingdom parables to his followers (8:4-18)

(a) Parable of the Sower (8:4-15)

(b) Parable of the lamp (8:16-18)

(C) His followers must be rightly related to him (8:19-21)

(7) Authority over all realms (8:22-56)

(A) Nature (8:22-25)

- (B) Demons (8:26-39)
- (C) Sickness and death (8:40-56)
- (8) Christ prepares his disciples (9:1-50)
 - (A) Sending of the disciples to preach (9:1-6)
 - (B) Herod's curiosity (9:7-9)
 - (C) Feeding of the 5000 (9:10-17)
 - (D) Peter's confession (9:18-20)
 - (E) Christ's teaching on discipleship (9:21-27)
 - (F) Transfiguration (9:28-36)
 - (G) Disciples' inability to cast out the demon (9:37-43)
 - (H) Christ's second prediction of his death (9:44-45)
 - (I) Christ's instructions on humility (9:46-50)
- IV. The Son of Man's journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51—19:28)
 - (1) Increase in opposition to Christ (9:51—11:54)
 - (A) Samaritans reject Christ (9:51-56)
 - (B) Cost of discipleship (9:57-62)
 - (C) Ministry of the 70 (10:1-24)
 - (a) Sending (10:1-16)
 - (b) Returning (10:17-24)
 - (D) Lawyer tests Christ (10:25-37)
 - (a) How to inherit eternal life? (10:25-28)
 - (b) Who is his neighbor? Parable of the good Samaritan (10:29-37)
 - (E) Mary and Martha (10:38-42)
 - (F) Prayer (11:1-13)
 - (a) Lord's prayer (11:1-4)
 - (b) Parable of the persistent friend (11:5-10)
 - (c) Parable of a good father (11:11-13)
 - (G) Religious leaders reject Christ (11:14-36)
 - (a) Attributing Christ's miracles to Satan (11:14-16)
 - (b) Christ's rebuttal (11:17-32)
 - (c) Parable of the lamp (11:33-36)
 - (H) Christ rejects the religious leaders (11:37-54)
 - (a) Woes to the Pharisees (11:37-44)
 - (b) Woes to the lawyers (11:45-54)
 - (2) Christ's instructions to his disciples as a result of this rejection (Luke 12:1—19:28)
 - (A) Warnings against the leaven of the Pharisees (12:1-12)
 - (B) Warnings against covetousness (12:13-34)
 - (a) Parable of the rich fool (12:13-21)

- (b) God's provision for the seeker (12:22-34)
- (C) Warnings concerning his return (12:35-48)
 - (a) Parable of the watchful servants (12:35-41)
 - (b) Parable of the unprepared servant (12:42-48)
- (D) Warnings on discipleship (12:49-53)
- (E) Warnings on discerning the times and settling quickly (12:54-59)
- (F) Necessity of repentance (13:1-5)
- (G) Parable of the fig tree (13:6-9)
- (H) Healing of the bent-over woman (13:10-17)
- (I) Christ teaches on the kingdom (13:18-30)
 - (a) Parables of kingdom growth (13:18-21)
 - (b) Narrow entrance into the kingdom (13:22-30)
- (J) Christ laments over Jerusalem (13:31-35)
- (K) Healing of the man with dropsy (14:1-6)
- (L) Parable of the ambitious guest and a host (14:7-15)
- (M) Parable of the supper and the excuses (14:16-24)
- (N) Christ's discipleship teaching (14:25-35)
- (O) God's rejoicing over the repentant lost sinner (15:1-32)
 - (a) Parable of the lost sheep (15:1-7)
 - (b) Parable of the lost coin (15:8-10)
 - (c) Parable of the lost son (15:11-32)
- (P) Parable of the unjust steward (16:1-12)
- (Q) Story of the rich man and Lazarus (16:13-31)
- (R) Christ cultivates spiritual sensitivity in his disciples (17:1-19)
 - (a) Not giving unnecessary offense (17:1-2)
 - (b) Forgiveness (17:3-4)
 - (c) Faith (17:5-6)
 - (d) Practicing duty without expecting gratitude: parable of the unprofitable servants (17:7-10)
 - (e) Thankfulness: cleansing of the lepers (17:11-19)
- (S) Christ's teaching on the kingdom (17:20-37)
 - (a) Present in the King (17:20-21)
 - (b) Postponed (17:22)
 - (c) Established at His return (17:23-37)
- (T) Christ teaches on prayer (18:1-14)
 - (a) Parable of the judge and the widow (18:1-8)
 - (b) Parable of the Pharisee and the publican (18:9-14)
- (U) Christ's concern for the children (18:15-17)

- (V) Christ teaches on sacrifice (18:18-30)
 - (a) Story of the rich young ruler (18:18-27)
 - (b) Christ will reward sacrifice (18:28-30)
- (W) Christ predicts his death and resurrection (18:31-34)
- (X) Christ heals Bartimaeus (18:35-43)
- (Y) Christ spiritually heals Zacchaeus (19:1-10)
- (Z) Parable of the minas (19:11-28)
- V. Rejection, passion, resurrection of the Son of Man (Luke 19:29—24:53)
 - (1) Triumphal entry (19:29-40)
 - (2) Ongoing rejection of Christ by the nation (19:41—21:4)
 - (A) Predicting the 70 AD judgment (19:41-44)
 - (B) Cleansing of the Temple (19:45-46)
 - (C) Plot to kill Christ (19:47-48)
 - (D) Religious leaders question Christ's authority (20:1-8)
 - (E) Parable of the tenants (20:9-18)
 - (F) Reciprocal questions (20:19-44)
 - (a) Religious leaders' hostile questions (20:19-40)
 - (i) Resurrection (20:19-26)
 - (ii) Taxes (20:27-40)
 - (b) Christ's reciprocal question (20:41-44)
 - (G) Christ rejects the religious leaders (20:45-47)
 - (H) Widow's mite (21:1-4)
 - (3) Olivet discourse (21:5-38)
 - (A) Prediction of 70 AD (21:5-6)
 - (B) Disciples' questions (21:7)
 - (C) Expansion upon 70 AD (21:8-24)
 - (D) Second Advent (21:25-28)
 - (E) Concluding illustrative exhortations (21:29-38)
 - (a) Fig tree (21:29-33)
 - (b) Exhortation to watchfulness (21:34-38)
 - (4) Events leading to the crucifixion (22:1-62)
 - (A) Judas agrees to betray Christ (22:1-6)
 - (B) Preparation of the upper room (22:7-13)
 - (C) Celebration of the Passover (22:14-18)
 - (D) Institution of the Lord's supper (22:19-20)
 - (E) Christ predicts betrayal by Judas (22:21-23)
 - (F) Greatest in the kingdom (22:24-30)
 - (G) Prediction of Peter's denial (22:31-34)

- (H) Prediction of coming conflict (22:35-38)
- (I) Christ's Gethsemane experiences (22:39-46)
- (J) Judas' betrayal (22:47-53)
- (K) Peter's denial (22:54-62)
- (5) Trials, crucifixion, and burial (Luke 22:63—23:56)
 - (A) Christ is beaten (22:63-65)
 - (B) Trial before the Sanhedrin (22:66-71)
 - (C) Trial before Pilate (23:1-7)
 - (D) Trial before Herod (23:8-12)
 - (E) Trial before Pilate (23:13-25)
 - (F) Crucifixion (23:26-49)
 - (G) Burial (23:50-56)
- (6) Resurrection (24:1-53)
 - (A) Resurrection (24:1-12)
 - (B) Resurrected Christ appears on road to Emmaus (24:13-35)
 - (C) Christ appears to the eleven (24:36-53)
 - (a) Proof of His resurrection (24:36-45)
 - (b) Great commission (24:46-49)
 - (c) The Ascension (24:50-53)