

The Gospel Of Luke

INTRODUCTION

About Luke

Luke is the only writer in the NT that was a Gentile and yet he has written what appears to be one of the most accurate and compelling records of the life of Christ. Many theories have been thrown around about who Luke was, but one thing is certain, he was a man that loved the Lord and wanted to take great care in writing about His life. We have this inspired writing as a message of good news (gospel) in our New Testaments today.

Luke was a doctor (Col. 4:14) in his work by day, and his care for others is seen in this letter to a man by the name of Theophilus, whom Luke called, “most excellent”. No doubt Luke writes this book to a serious inquirer of a high office, who strangely enough has the name in Greek, “Lover of God”. We could easily begin and say that this book can be read and understood by every serious student who will come to its pages as a lover of God. While Luke’s gospel is not the longest it is certainly the fullest of all the gospels. In this, I mean, that it is the most detailed record of all time regarding the life of Christ.

About The Gospel

Luke wrote with a very scholarly Greek structure throughout the gospel. The first four verses, are said to be some of the best Greek in all of the New Testament. In these verses Luke tells his audience that he has taken special care to do his research on what he is going to say. With that research, came the guidance of the Holy Spirit to help him with the very thoughts that should be expressed in the text, according to the will of God. It appears that Luke’s sources were good and his opportunities were many for gathering quality information for this book.

Since Luke was the traveling companion to Paul, it is certain that he knew the main figures of the church in its infancy. It is certain that Luke would listen to the first hand information that he had gathered from those who were eye witnesses of the life of Christ. The care that he took in writing, can be seen in many areas of his gospel where he shares explicit details with the reader. One example, is his dating of the coming of John the Baptist. Luke uses 6 different keys that could lead a reader to know the exact time of this event (I have highlighted them below).

He writes,

- 1 Now **in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar**, when **Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea**, and **Herod was tetrarch of Galilee**, and **his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis**, and **Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene**,
- 2 in the **high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas**, the word of God came **to John**, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.
(Luke 3:1-2 NAU)

Luke's gospel account was written to Gentiles by a Gentile. Both Luke and Theophilus are gentiles and there is nothing written in the book that would be too difficult for any Gentile to come to know. When a word was found in the Hebrew language to express a thought in the Greek, Luke took the initiative to change it to the Greek so that his Gentile audience would grasp what he was saying (Simon is "Simon the zealot" as opposed to "Simon the Canaanite" or Instead of "Calvary [Hebrew word Golgatha], Luke write the Greek word "Kranion" to represent the phrase "place of the skull" and "Rabbi" is replaced with "Master"). Another distinctive mark of Luke's gospel being for Gentiles, is seen in the genealogy of Christ. Luke traces the genealogy to Adam (beginning of the human race) while Matthew traces his to Abraham the father of the Jews (Matt. 1:2; Luke 3:38). For us who are not Jews, this is the easiest gospel to read, since it related to people who are much like ourselves (Gentiles)

It is in Luke's gospel that we find a message of hope for all mankind. There is no longer a distinction (Gentile or Jew, male or female etc). Barclay said that in Luke, "Jesus Christ is for all men without distinction." Luke shows Jesus dealing with the Samaritans and he make no big deal about it, while other gospel account, like John, would point out that Jews have no dealing with Samaritans. A Roman centurion is praised for his faith. The people that Christ came to save, Luke says "... will come from east and west and from north and south, and will recline {at the table} in the kingdom of God" (Luke 13:29 NAU). Luke is interested in the poor, outcasts and sinners, as being a friend with the Lord, Jesus Christ. Luke even tells of the event of the penitent thief on the cross, which found mercy before his death. While in the other gospels the writer records Jesus sending his disciples to the Jews and not the Samaritan and the Gentile, Luke omits the whole idea and quotes Isaiah 40:3-5, to show that, "all flesh shall see the salvation of our God". Luke saw no end to the awesome love of God in His Son, Jesus Christ. As a physician Luke had a heart to help people to be well. He quotes Jesus as saying, "{It is} not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:31-32 NAU).

The Gospel In History

Many writers have recorded facts about the gospels in their writings. These writings apply to the gospel according to Luke. Justin Martyr made the point that the memoirs of the apostles (a way he referred to the gospels), were read on the same footing as the writings of the prophets of the Old Testament. The gospel of Luke found its place as the most prominently read near the end of the second century. Justin Martyr also took note of the regular reading of these gospels in the assemblies of Christians. Justin Martyr made frequent quotes from the gospels and some of these are only recorded in the account that Luke put together.

When dealing with the manuscripts of the gospel of Luke, we can find some interesting facts. The gospel of Luke and Matthew have more preserved copies and fragments than any other book in the NT canon. In early writings, that was said to be

released near the end of the first century, Luke and Matthew are quoted frequently as Scripture. The details that Luke offers in his work are so important because of his careful examination of the reports of eyewitnesses. What he reveals in his account are necessary practical teachings that lead to knowing how to live the blessed life.

Luke 1:1-4: Accurate Account

- 1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us,**
- 2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word,**

- "Many" had put forth the effort to make accounts of the life of Jesus when Luke wrote his gospel (1:3).

- Luke uses the word "many", when talking about other accounts that have been written concerning the life of Christ and he most likely is not referring only to the other gospel accounts in the New Testament (Matthew, Mark and John), but to various firsthand accounts from different eyewitnesses. The reason for saying this is that John's gospel was not yet written and with Matthew and Mark being left, it doesn't seem that the word "many", would have been the proper word choice by such a careful writer. Also, even if Luke had viewed Matthew and Mark, we can be certain that he did not stop there. With inspiration moving his pen, and the many voices of personal encounters with Christ guiding his heart, Luke has written a record of the life of Christ that will be special in comparison to the "many" others that have been collected.

- The things that were accomplished among the people of Luke's day, were founded on real evidence. Actually some translations render the word "accomplished", "most certainly believed". The reason for this is because the original word means, "to carry out fully (in evidence)" or "to completely assure (or convince); entirely accomplish." In essence what Luke is telling us is that the hard facts have been examined and the things that he is about to write are true and can be used as convincing evidence unto belief in Christ.

- Luke does not write his gospel account, because the other ones being circulated are inaccurate, but rather, as one focused on the finest details, Luke wants to write a more complete rendition of the gospel story.

- When Luke says, "among us" he is certainly referring to his contemporaries, among who, would have existed, those who had been with Jesus and had seen and heard of his words and works. In this phrase, he would also be comforting his Gentile audience, in informing them that they can rest on the truth that he is writing. The apostles would have held the first place in being the prominent source of information, while what Luke calls, "ministers of the word" would make reference to those who had known Jesus, and had helped to preach the Christ to others. The word used there, literally means, "an assistant". While the apostles were charged with being witnesses to the ends of the earth, there are many assistants as well.

- 3 it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write {it} out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus;**
- 4 so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.**

- While Luke doesn't say that the other efforts made to create an account of the life of Christ, were inaccurate, he assures his readers (Theophilus) that his writings are a very scholarly work of investigation into the life of Christ using an accurate consecutive historical recollection of the information.
- Luke actually states, "it seemed fitting for me as well", which tells us that he was only going to set out to do what others had already worked towards. Luke adds though, that he had, "investigated everything carefully from the beginning". Just as Luke had said that things were handed down to them from the beginning, he begins his investigation from the beginning. It is interesting that Luke gives us the most detailed account of the beginning of the life of Christ before His ministry. Indeed, he had done his homework and the message is the most complete account of the life of our Lord.
- Luke also tells us that he tried to write out this account "in consecutive order". While other writers record many of the events in the life of Christ in their writings, Luke seems to address that they were not arranged in the most complete way. He wants to offer an orderly account.
- Luke explains to Theophilus (the recipient of the letter) that his reason for writing in this way is to offer the "exact truth" about all that has been taught concerning Jesus, the Christ.
- Luke uses language throughout this introduction to the book that would be similar to the address offered to a king or most high and excellent official (See Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:25). Theophilus was a high official of the Roman world of that day. It has been said that Luke wrote to Theophilus to answer his questions and settle his interests in the unknowns about Jesus. While there is absolutely nothing that is known of the history of Theophilus, and some have even said that Luke used this text figuratively, we cannot be found saying that saints represent the "Theophilus" (lover of God), and that this was written to all of mankind.
- We need to appreciate the effort of Luke in writing this gospel to Theophilus and to those of us who want to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Perhaps there is someone here today who wants to know and love Jesus more. Can we help you? As we enter this study of Luke we will certainly come to know the Lord. I hope that today you will commit your life to Jesus and be willing to grow in His grace and knowledge.