

Introduction to Luke

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Today we're looking at the introduction to the Gospel according to Luke. And similar to the other three accounts of the good news about the life, death and the resurrection of Jesus. The title of Luke's account is simply, "The Gospel According to Luke." It is generally agreed that the Gospel according to Luke, and the Acts of the Apostles, were written by the same person in consecutive order. We'll talk more about Acts in another lesson, but many references will be made to Acts as we look at the introduction to Luke simply because of the similarities in the writer and the consecutive order of the two books.

Let's first of all, as we begin, let's look at the author of Luke's account. Although like the other Gospel accounts, the writer of Luke's account never identifies himself personally, either in Luke, or in Acts. But, the earliest records of the church unanimously attribute the Gospel according to Luke to, to Luke the Gentile. Further, the writers use of "we" and "us" in the book of Acts, and his association with Paul's journeys may tend to lead us to believe that, that Luke is the author of this Gospel. According to the earliest tradition, as I said, Luke was a Gentile. That being the case, this is the only Gentile that wrote a letter that was accepted into the canon. And he has two books of Luke and Acts. The apostle Paul seems to confirm this, distinguishing Luke from those who were of the circumcision in Colossians, chapter 4, verses 11 to 14. And so we recognize then that Luke, no doubt, was a Gentile.

We also know that Paul refers to Luke as "the physician" in Colossians 4, and verse 14. Another thing that causes us to believe that Luke was probably a doctor of the medical field, is that the number of healings, healing miracles, that is recorded in the Gospel According to Luke. There are at least 10. More than any other gospel account. And so, because Luke spends so much time dealing with that, we kind of have a tendency to believe, and that supports the idea that Luke is the author of this great work.

We also know that Luke carefully researched all that he wrote. If you look at chapter 1, and verse number 3. Luke writes this, "It seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning." And so he searched it out. And this is important, I think, because Luke quotes from the Old Testament. He's a Gentile; he's not a Jew. But he quotes from the Old Testament, about 30 different times, from 8 different books of the Old Testament. And then, he, Luke, has familiarized himself with the Old Testament priesthood. He's familiarized himself with the Jewish customs. He's familiarize himself with with the temple rituals. And all of this is presented, and even prophecies of the Old Testament. Being a Gentile he wouldn't necessarily be familiar, at least, familiar enough to write the way he writes about them without the detailed research that he does.

He learned the geological records of both Joseph and Mary, tracing Mary's ancestry all the way back to Adam. He records the Messianic promise that God would give his Son the throne of David, and that He would reign over the house of Jacob forever, and that His kingdom would be everlasting. He provides the account of Mary's anthem of praise in which he cites from portions of about 23 different Old Testament passages. And then Luke records Zacharias' exclamation of praise at the birth of John, an affirmation that is heavily punctuated with phrases from the Old Testament. He new details about Jewish circumcision and purification. All of this shows that Luke the Gentile did

detailed research about all the things that he wrote. Very little else is known about Luke. We have no record of really where he came from, or anything about his conversion. However, both Eusebius and Jerome identify him as being from Antioch. Now, if this is correct, and I have no reason to think that it's not. But if this is correct, then that might explain so many references to Antioch throughout the book of Acts.

Think about then the place and the date of Luke's account. The Book of Acts ends with Paul in his first Roman imprisonment. The date for his incarceration is believed to be somewhere between either 60 and 62, or 62 to 64. And so this has led many people to believe that the Gospel according to Luke, as well as Acts, was written from Rome. It's also assumed that Luke and Acts were written in about the same time. In Luke chapter 1 and verse 3, when he says he has written in consecutive order, which means one, at least to me, it means one after the other. And so it's a pretty common belief that these are written at about the same time.

And just like the other gospels, though, just like the other synoptics, it's, it's really difficult to date Luke. Some say Luke was written in the 60s, some say 70s, and some even in the 80s. However, if Luke uses Mark as a source, and that is pretty common thought that Luke and Matthew use Mark. Mark was written first, and Luke and Matthew both use Mark. And if that's the count, and I am correct, in my dating of Mark at pre-70, to say the very least, then Luke's account has to be written before AD 70, as well.

Another consideration for the pre-70 date for Luke, is that Luke records Jesus' prophecy regarding the destruction of Jerusalem in his Gospel, but makes no mention of the fulfillment of the prophecy in the historical narrative of Acts. Which causes me to believe that both are written pre-70. It also must be considered, if Luke is writing a defense for Paul, and I'll get to that argument in a moment. But, if Luke is writing for defense for Paul, it seems reasonable that these would have been written just prior to Paul's death, which is thought to be probably in 67 or 68. So all of this supports the dating of Luke's account to be just prior to the death of Paul around 67 or 68.

Dating the synoptics as I have, and assuming that Mark would be dated about somewhere around 65, Matthew somewhere around 66, this puts Luke, then, somewhere around 67, 68, which all fits in line with what we believe, to at least what I believe, to be the case. And so that would be where I would put the dating of the gospel. Again, let me reiterate, that dating the gospels is a difficult, very difficult, and imprecise task. But this is where I have landed in my study, and I think it is pretty substantiated.

Let's think about then, the audience. Who was the Gospel of Luke written to? Well, according to Luke chapter 1, and verse 3, it was written to the "most excellent Theophilus." Now, the term "Theophilus" may be a nickname. But it means "lover of God," which has caused many of us to assume that Theophilus is a convert to Christianity. You know, you read in Philippians chapter 4 and verse 22, as Paul is summing up his Philippian letter, that many from the household of Caesar were a part of the family of God there in Rome. And so it's pretty, and especially since it is "most excellent Theophilus." "Most excellent" probably refers to Theophilus as being a, a Roman official of some kind, and probably from Caesar's house. And that would cause us to understand that Theophilus was a Christian. And Paul is specifically writing to this young Christian, informing him about Jesus and about the Gospel. It may be though, that Luke envisioned a much broader audience for his account, rather than just this one man. I don't want to undermine the fact that Luke and Acts are written to Theophilus. This is the primary audience, no doubt.

However, the way that it's written may very well expand. As a matter of fact, it seems to me that Luke may be subtle enough to allow the Jews, the Jewish Christians, to gain something from his letter. If you look in chapter 3, or chapter 13, beginning in verse 1, and going all the way through verse 5, when he talks about repentance, he is talking specifically about Galileans. And it makes perfect sense that he is saying that "unless you repent," "you" being those Jews, "unless you repent, you will all likewise perish," just like everybody else. You have to repent, too. So, I think there's a subtle part of Luke's gospel that is open and is to be used and to be read by the Jewish Christians. But I think it's also more specifically to a Gentile audience like Theophilus, those who didn't have the background.

As a matter of fact, when we read about this, in Acts chapter 1 and verse 19, Luke cites an Aramaic word, and identifies it has a term from their language, which indicates that he's writing to Gentiles, about the language of the Jews' Aramaic. Also Luke identifies locations that would have been familiar to all Jews. In chapter 4 and verse 31, he talks about Capernaum, which is a city of the Galileans. He talks about, or Caesarea, excuse me, says Caesarea, which was a city of Galilee. And why would he need to tell Jews living in that region that this was a city of Galilee. Another thing is, sometimes Luke uses Greek turns over Hebraisms. For example, He uses Calgary instead of Golgotha, like Matthew does. And so, therefore, although Luke is writing primarily to Theophilus, a Roman, most likely a Roman official, evidence suggests that he is also including his letter to, or intending for his letter to be written, read by Jews and Gentiles alike. Christians in general, giving them a detailed, a consecutive order of the life of Jesus Christ. And I think this is the primary audience, to whom is he writing. To the church, the early church.

And what is the purpose of the Gospel according to Luke? Well, the primary purpose is stated in verses 1 to 4. And if you just read verse four of this, he says, "So that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught." "I want you to know the exact truth about the things that you have been taught." And this is why he is writing this. This is the purpose, so that you can know the truth.

I believe that he is writing a defense for Paul, as was Paul was in prison. He is writing, its primary purpose is a defense for Paul, while he was in prison, just before his execution, to get the people to understand who, what Paul did. And notice there's something that's very interesting, that's almost always, in my opinion, overlooked. It's in verse 3, when he says he investigated everything carefully, from the beginning. From the beginning of who Jesus was. And he's written a consecutive order of the life, the death, burial and the resurrection of Jesus. And then he picks up with how the church started and going through. And he's telling, "This is what Paul preached. This is what Paul was preaching throughout his life." And so, Luke is writing this historical record, in a more chronological sequence, than was previously known by Mark or Matthew. And Mark and Matthew's record didn't go in a consecutive order the way that Luke's does. And so I think it's important for us to look at this, in the idea of Luke. Luke's purpose was to inform, primarily Theophilus, but also for all Christians to learn from this a more detailed order of the life of Jesus and this is the gospel according to Luke. A more detailed order of the life of Jesus, and to inform Theophilus specifically, of what Jesus taught, where He came from, who He was, what He stood for, and then His death, burial, and resurrection.

Then we look at, as we close this out, we look at the literary structure of the Gospel According to Luke. Now, you know, literary structure is a personal preference and I like to follow a book. When I read through a book, I like to look at points of change. And the best way to do it in the Gospels is to look at points where the time frame or the location changes. And so, in the Gospels, it's easy to look

at the different places where the ministry of Jesus takes place. And that's the way that I've divided the Gospel according to Luke. And so in chapter 1, we have the preparation. In chapter 1, going all the way through chapter 4 and verse 13, we have the preparation for the ministry of Jesus. And then in chapter 4 and verse 14, all the way through chapter 9, in verse 50, we have Jesus' Galilean ministry.

And then in chapter 9, verses 51, through chapter 13, and verse 21, we have the Judean ministry. And then in chapter 13, and verse 22, to chapter 19, in verse 27, we have Jesus' Perea ministry. And then in chapter 19, verse 28, through chapter 21, in verse 38, we have Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem. And then, in chapter 22, verses 1 to 38, we have Jesus' last supper. And I've kind of separated that out, and put that in one point, because I think that Last Supper, as we look at Luke's account seems to be more detailed than all of them, except for maybe John's account. And so I've kind of separated that one out by itself. And then in chapter 22, verses 39, through 23, verse 56, we have Jesus' arrest, His trials and His crucifixion. And then in chapter 24, 1 through 52, we have Jesus' resurrection and ascension. And that's the way that I have divided this book out.

Now again, I want to reiterate what I've said in every other time: I'm not going to give you a detailed outline of the book of Luke, because there's just too much. He crams so much more detail, than the other Gospels do. Luke is the longest of the Synoptic Gospels, and crams so much, and so much detail. So if you outline it individually and detailed outline, you're probably going to have four or five pages of just the outline of what is going on. So I'm not going to take the time to show you what I've done. But I want you to make sure that you do that as you, before, actually, before you begin the detailed study of this great, great masterpiece. And remember that if you're going to do try to do a chronological study, although Luke doesn't give every detail about everything, and if you're going to do a chronological study, you're going to have to kind of merge the Gospels together to get it all. Luke's study is more chronological in sequence than is Matthew's or Mark's. Thank you for this time, and I hope that you can gain much from this study.