

Introduction to Luke NIV Study Bible

The author's name does not appear in the book, but much unmistakable evidence points to Luke. This Gospel is a companion volume to the book of Acts, and the language and structure of these two books indicate that both were written by the same person. They are addressed to the same individual, Theophilus, and the second volume refers to the first (Ac 1:1). Certain sections in Acts use the pronoun "we" (Ac 16:10–17; 20:5–15; 21:1–18; 27:1—28:16), indicating that the author was with Paul when the events described in these passages took place. By process of elimination, Paul's "dear friend Luke, the doctor" (Col 4:14) and "fellow worker" (Phm 24), becomes the most likely candidate. His authorship is supported by the uniform testimony of early Christian writings (e.g., the Muratorian Canon, a.d. 170, and the works of Irenaeus, c. 180).

Luke was probably a Gentile by birth, well educated in Greek culture, a physician by profession, a companion of Paul at various times from his second missionary journey to his final imprisonment in Rome, and a loyal friend who remained with the apostle after others had deserted him (2Ti 4:11).

Antioch (of Syria) and Philippi are among the places suggested as his hometown.

Recipient and Purpose

The Gospel is specifically directed to Theophilus (1:3), whose name means "one who loves God" and almost certainly refers to a particular person rather than to lovers of God in general. The use of "most excellent" with the name further indicates an individual, and supports the idea that he was a Roman official or at least of high position and wealth. He was possibly Luke's patron, responsible for seeing that the writings were copied and distributed. Such a dedication to the publisher was common at that time.

Theophilus, however, was more than a publisher. The message of this Gospel was intended for his own instruction (1:4) as well as the instruction of those among whom the book would be circulated. The fact that the Gospel was initially directed to Theophilus does not narrow or limit its purpose. It was written to strengthen the faith of all believers and to answer the attacks of unbelievers. It was presented to displace some disconnected and ill-founded reports about Jesus (see 1:1–4 and note). Luke wanted to show that the place of the Gentile Christian in God's kingdom is based on the teaching of Jesus. He wanted to commend the preaching of the gospel to the whole world.

Date and Place of Writing

The two most commonly suggested periods for dating the Gospel of Luke are: (1) a.d. 59–63, and (2) the 70s or the 80s (see essay and chart, p. 1943).

The place of writing was probably Rome, though Achaia, Ephesus and Caesarea have also been suggested. The place to which it was sent would, of course, depend on the residence of Theophilus. By its detailed designations of places in the Holy Land, the Gospel seems to be intended for readers who were unfamiliar with that land. Antioch, Achaia and Ephesus are possible destinations.

Style

Luke had outstanding command of the Greek language. His vocabulary is extensive and rich, and his style at times approaches that of classical Greek (as in the preface, 1:1–4), while at other times it is quite Semitic (1:5—2:52)—often like the Septuagint (the pre-Christian Greek translation of the OT).

Characteristics

The third Gospel presents the works and teachings of Jesus that are especially important for understanding the way of salvation. Its scope is complete from the birth of Christ to his ascension, its arrangement is orderly, and it appeals to both Jews and Gentiles. The writing is characterized by literary excellence, historical detail and warm, sensitive understanding of Jesus and those around him.

Since the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) report many of the same episodes in Jesus' life, one would expect much similarity in their accounts. The dissimilarities reveal the distinctive emphases of the separate writers. Luke's characteristic themes include: (1) universality, recognition of Gentiles as well as Jews in God's plan (see, e.g., 2:30–32 and notes on 2:31; 3:6); (2) emphasis on prayer, especially Jesus' praying before important occasions (see note on 3:21); (3) joy at the announcement of the gospel or "good news" (see note on 1:14); (4) special concern for the role of women (see, e.g., 8:1–3 and notes); (5) special interest in the poor (some of the rich were included among Jesus' followers, but he seemed closest to the poor; see note on 12:33); (6) concern for sinners (Jesus was a friend to those deep in sin); (7) stress on the family circle (Jesus' activity included men, women and children, with the setting frequently in the home); (8) repeated use of the Messianic title "Son of Man" (used 25 times; see 19:10; Da 7:13 and notes); (9) emphasis on the Holy Spirit (see note on 4:1); (10) inclusion of more parables than any other Gospel (see chart, p. 2130); (11) emphasis on praising God (see 1:64; 24:53 and notes).

Sources

Although Luke acknowledges that many others had written of Jesus' life (1:1), he does not indicate that he relied solely on these reports for his own writing. He used personal investigation and arrangement, based on testimony from "eyewitnesses and servants of the word" (1:2)—including the preaching and oral accounts of the apostles. His language differences from the other Synoptics and his blocks of distinctive material (e.g., 10:1—18:14; 19:1–28) indicate independent work, though he obviously used some of the same sources (see essay, p. 1943).

Plan

Luke's account of Jesus' ministry can be divided into three major parts: (1) the events that occurred in and around Galilee (4:14—9:50), (2) those that took place in Judea and Perea (9:51—19:27), and (3) those of the final week in Jerusalem (19:28—24:53). Luke's uniqueness is especially seen in the amount of material devoted to Jesus' closing ministry in Judea and Perea. This material is predominantly made up of accounts of Jesus' discourses. Twenty-one of the 28 parables that occur in Luke are found in 10:30—19:27. Of the 20 miracles recorded in Luke, only 5 appear in 9:51—19:27. Already in the ninth chapter (see note on 9:51), Jesus is seen anticipating his final appearance in Jerusalem and his crucifixion (see note on 13:22).

The main theme of the Gospel is the nature of Jesus' Messiahship and mission, and a key verse is 19:10.

Outline

- The Preface (1:1–4)
- The Births of John the Baptist and Jesus (1:5—2:52)
 - The Annunciations (1:5–56)
 - The Birth of John the Baptist (1:57–80)
 - The Birth and Childhood of Jesus (ch. 2)
- The Preparation of Jesus for His Public Ministry (3:1—4:13)
 - His Forerunner (3:1–20)
 - His Baptism (3:21–22)
 - His Genealogy (3:23–38)
 - His Temptation (4:1–13)
- His Ministry in Galilee (4:14—9:9)
 - The Beginning of the Ministry in Galilee (4:14–41)
 - The First Tour of Galilee (4:42—5:39)
 - A Sabbath Controversy (6:1–11)
 - The Choice of the 12 Apostles (6:12–16)
 - The Sermon on the Plain (6:17–49)
 - Miracles in Capernaum and Nain (7:1–18)
 - The Inquiry of John the Baptist (7:19–29)
 - Jesus and the Pharisees (7:30–50)
 - The Second Tour of Galilee (8:1–3)
 - The Parables of the Kingdom (8:4–21)
 - The Trip across the Sea of Galilee (8:22–39)
 - The Third Tour of Galilee (8:40—9:9)
- His Withdrawal to Regions around Galilee (9:10–50)
 - To the Eastern Shore of the Sea of Galilee (9:10–17)
 - To Caesarea Philippi (9:18–50)
- His Ministry in Judea (9:51—13:21)
 - Journey through Samaria to Judea (9:51–62)
 - The Mission of the 72 (10:1–24)
 - The Lawyer and the Parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25–37)
 - Jesus at Bethany with Mary and Martha (10:38–42)
 - Teachings in Judea (11:1—13:21)
- His Ministry in and around Perea (13:22—19:27)
 - The Narrow Door (13:22–30)
 - Warning concerning Herod (13:31–35)
 - At a Pharisee's House (14:1–23)
 - The Cost of Discipleship (14:24–35)
 - The Parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Lost Son (ch. 15)
 - The Parable of the Shrewd Manager (16:1–18)
 - The Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19–31)

- Miscellaneous Teachings (17:1–10)
- Ten Healed of Leprosy (17:11–19)
- The Coming of the Kingdom (17:20–37)
- The Persistent Widow (18:1–8)
- The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (18:9–14)
- Jesus and the Children (18:15–17)
- The Rich Young Ruler (18:18–30)
- Christ Foretells His Death (18:31–34)
- A Blind Beggar Given His Sight (18:35–43)
- Jesus and Zacchaeus (19:1–10)
- The Parable of the Ten Minas (19:11–27)
- His Last Days: Sacrifice and Triumph (19:28—24:53)
 - The Triumphal Entry (19:28–44)
 - The Cleansing of the Temple (19:45–48)
 - The Last Controversies with the Jewish Leaders (ch. 20)
 - The Olivet Discourse (ch. 21)
 - The Last Supper (22:1–38)
 - Jesus Praying in Gethsemane (22:39–46)
 - Jesus' Arrest (22:47–65)
 - Jesus on Trial (22:66—23:25)
 - The Crucifixion (23:26–56)
 - The Resurrection (24:1–12)
 - The Post-Resurrection Ministry (24:13–49)
 - The Ascension (24:50–53)

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