



Putting the Puzzle Pieces Together

Sixth Series: "The Top Edge" New Testament: Gospels
Lesson 20: Luke

I. The Author

- A. It is widely assume that Luke is the author of both this gospel and the book of Acts.
1. They both begin with a declaration to Theophilus. He is assumed to be a high official in the Roman government.
 2. Acts 1:1 refers back to "the first account."
 3. The "we-sections" of Acts allow us to deduce that Luke is the author.
 - a. Example: Acts 11:28, 16:10, 20:6, 21:17-18
 4. There is a common style and common approach to the material. "They are two volumes of one and the same work, conceived and composed as unit." (Interpreter's Bible, p. 4)
 5. Early church tradition supports Luke as the author.

"Justin Martyr, born in Samaria about the year 100, quotes Luke's Gospel repeatedly. Irenaeus (115-190) says in his book against heresy (3,1): 'Luke the follower of Paul, preserved in a book the gospel which that apostle preached.' He also gives an account (3,14) of the contents of this gospel, which shows that he refers to the book we now know as Luke's Gospel. Tertullian (150 or 160 – 220 or 24) says that his teacher Cerdon received only Luke's Gospel." (St. Luke's Gospel, p. 9)
- B. Luke was probably a Gentile convert. He is the only New Testament writer who is not a Jew.
1. His name is Greek.
 2. Paul seems to distinguish him from the Jews in Col. 4:10-14.
 3. The writing is refined Greek. "The first four verses (of Luke) are well-nigh the best Greek in the New Testament." (The Gospel of Luke, p. XIV)
- C. Luke was a physician
1. Paul refers to Him as "the beloved physician" in Col. 4:14
 2. His vivid descriptions, interest in details and use of medical terms support this conclusion.
- D. He was a companion of Paul

1. He spent two years with Paul in Casearea (Acts 11)
 2. Paul mentions him three times in his letters (Col. 4:14, Philemon 24 and 2 Tim. 4:11)
 3. He was in Rome with Paul..."only Luke is with me."
- E. He was closely associated with Mark.
1. Luke and Mark were together with Paul in Rome (Philemon 24)
 2. "When Paul says that Luke alone is with him he at once begs Timothy (2 Tim. 4:10) to be sure and bring Mark with him when Timothy, at Paul's request, hastens to come to him at Rome. There is no reason to assume that Mark did not come; and both Luke and Mark were most likely with Paul when he laid his head upon the executioner's block. Neither Mark nor Luke had as yet written a Gospel; but both, as Paul's last mention of them shows, are most beloved of him and were thus close friends of each other. It is fair to conclude that whoever of them was the first to write his Gospel, the other must have promptly heard of it, secured a copy, and used it for his own writing." (St. Luke's Gospel, p. 6)
- F. He has a close relationship with Mary, Jesus' mother. He describes Jesus' birth from her perspective.

II. The recipient Theophilus

- A. Your "excellency" – an important title indication position, wealth, power and prominence.
- B. Some believe Theophilus was a new Christian that Luke was discipling. Other contend that he was an unbeliever but that by the time Luke sent him Acts, Theophilus had come to Christ in saving faith.

III. Date of the Book

It may have been written during Paul's first Roman Imprisonment (early 60's). The abrupt ending to Acts suggests it was complete before Paul's trial in 62 AD. There is no mention in Acts of Nero's persecution (64 AD), Paul's death (68 AD) or the destruction of Jerusalem (70 AD).

IV. The Theme:

- A. Luke wants to highlight Jesus as the Savior of the world. It has a universal appeal.
- B. He is writing to Gentiles (not Jews). He has a "broad interest in God's historical plan as revealed by the Old Testament and in the continuity of Christianity with Judaism." "He presents the Jewish Jesus in ways that would appeal to an audience of high-minded Gentiles."

V. Characteristics or distinctions of the Gospel of Luke:

- A. There is a universal "bent" to this gospel. Luke seldom quotes the Old Testament. He tends to translate Hebrew terms into Greek for his readers. Examples: not rabbi – but master, not Golgotha, but Calvary. He begins his genealogy not with Father Abraham, but rather with Adam.

- B. Luke is the easiest of the gospels to read. It is flowing, clear, vivid with details and accurate (see Luke 3:12).
- C. There is a focus on prayer “at the great moments of his life, Luke shows us Jesus at prayer.” See 3:2, 5:16, 6:12, 9:18, 9:29 and 23:40.
- D. Luke gives women a very special place in his gospel. He honors Mary, Elizabeth, Anna, the widow at Nain (7:11-17), Mary and Martha (10:38-42) and Mary Magdalene. Luke tells us that women supported Jesus financially (8:1-3).
- E. Luke “gives prominence to the work of the spirit.” There are six references to the Spirit in Mark, twelve in Matthew, seventeen in Luke and 57 in the Book of Acts.
- F. Luke emphasizes the resurrection appearances of Christ (See Ch. 24)
- G. Luke and Acts constitute almost 25% of the New Testament. This is the same length as all of Paul’s epistles.
- H. His language is smooth, refined. Not at all like Mark’s.
 “ ‘Straightaway,’ ‘again,’ and ‘much,’ among Mark’s favorite adverbs, are used infrequently or not at all. Of the 151 instances in Mark of the use of the historical present only one survives (Luke 8:49 – Mark 5:35).”
- I. “He does not follow the chronological order of events (except in some sections.” (St. Luke’s Gospel, p. 19)

VI. An outline (from St. Luke’s Gospel)

- A. The Beginning, Chapters 1 to 3.
- B. While Jesus was in Galilee, Chapter 4 to 9:50.
- C. When Jesus faced Jerusalem, 9:51 to 18:30.
- D. When Jesus actually entered Jerusalem, 18:31 to 21:38.
- E. The Consummation, Chapter 22 to 24.

VII. Key Bible Stories

| | |
|---|---------------|
| A. Birth of John the Baptist | 1:5-25 |
| B. Birth of Jesus | 1:5 – 2:21 |
| C. Jesus visits the temple as a child | 2:21-38 |
| D. Contrast of Mary and Martha | 10:38-42 |
| E. Jesus’ trials (including Herod) | 22:54 – 23:55 |
| F. His appearances after the resurrection | 24:13-32 |

VIII. So What?

Consider Luke 24:44

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss why you think God chose a doctor (a Gentile) to write one of His gospels?
2. Contrast the themes of each gospel. Discuss their differences.
3. Contrast the two accounts of Jesus' birth (Matthew 1 and Luke 2). Why do you think God gave us such different accounts?