



# **The Investigator's Gospel**

## **An Eyewitness Journey Through Luke**

### **Session 1 – Introduction to Luke**

#### **Luke – Who is he?**

Luke is the author of the Third Gospel and the Book of Acts in the New Testament, and a close friend and traveling companion of Paul.

The apostle called him “beloved physician” (Col. 4:14). Luke referred to his journeys with Paul and his company in Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16. He was with Paul during Paul’s imprisonments in Caesarea and Rome. Shortly before his martyrdom, Paul wrote that “only Luke is with me” (2 Tim. 4:11).

Early church fathers Jerome (about A.D. 400) and Eusebius (about A.D. 300) identified Luke as being from Antioch. His interest in Antioch is clearly seen in his many references to that city (Acts 11:19-27; 13:1-3; 14:26; 15:22, 35; 18:22).

Luke adopted Philippi as his home, remaining behind there to superintend the young church while Paul went on to Corinth during the second missionary journey (Acts 16:40). Paul identified Luke as a physician (Col. 4:14) and distinguished Luke from those “of the circumcision” (Col. 4:11), meaning Luke was not Jewish, and therefore a Gentile - tradition holds that he was Greek. The circumstances of Luke’s conversion are not revealed.

An early source supplied a fitting epitaph: “He served the Lord without distraction, having neither wife nor children, and at the age of 84 he fell asleep in Boeotia (central Greece, close to Athens), full of the Holy Spirit.”

#### **Date and Setting of the Gospel of Luke**

Luke probably wrote his Gospel around AD 60–61, perhaps when he was staying with Paul during his imprisonments in Caesarea (Acts 23:33) and Rome (Acts 28:14-16). This date (AD 60–61) is fairly close to the time that the other two synoptic Gospels were written—Mark, around AD 55–60, and Matthew, around AD 60. Paul mentioned in both Philemon 24 and 2 Timothy 4:11 that Luke and Mark were together, lending strong credence to Luke having access to Mark’s Gospel as a primary source. Tradition ascribes both Luke and Matthew as residents of Antioch, making Luke’s use of Matthew’s early Hebrew language Gospel (perhaps identified with the “Q” source), as well as Matthew’s translation, quite natural. Most likely, Luke took advantage of the prolonged imprisonment of Paul in both Caesarea and Rome to collect information relating to Jesus’ life and to record Paul’s memories of his four missionary journeys that had spanned the previous decade.

Another strong case for early dating, in addition to the abrupt ending of Acts (prior to Paul's execution in around 64 AD) is that Acts makes no mention of the destruction of Jerusalem, which occurred in AD 70. Surely this catastrophic event would have been included in any history of the early church. Luke reported Jesus' predictions that Jerusalem would be utterly demolished (19:41-44; 21:20-24). Mentioning the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy would have been vital for making the case of the prophetic power of Jesus.

### **Purpose and Readership**

Luke himself identified the purpose of his writing the Gospel (Luke 1:1-4). He wanted to confirm for Theophilus the certainty of the things he had been taught. Luke also wanted this information available for a wider readership –that the Gospel was never intended only for a specific individual named Theophilus, but that the term refers to all “lovers (or friends) of God.” Most scholars conclude that Luke's target audience were Gentile inquirers and Christians who needed strengthening in the faith.

Luke's purpose was to present a historical work “in order” (1:3). Most of his stories fall in chronological sequence. He often gave time indications (1:5, 26, 36, 56, 59; 2:42; 3:23; 9:28; 12:1, 7). More than any other Gospel writer, Luke connected his story with the larger Jewish and Roman world (see 2:1; 3:1-2).

A strong argument can be presented for a second, though clearly subordinate, purpose. Some see Luke-Acts as an apology for the Christian faith, a defense of it designed to show Roman authorities that Christianity posed no political threat. Pilate declared Jesus innocent three times (Luke 23:4, 14, 22). Acts does not present Roman officials as unfriendly (Acts 13:4-12; 16:35-40; 18:12-17; 19:31). Agrippa remarked to Festus that Paul could have been freed if he had not appealed to Caesar (Acts 26:32). Paul is pictured as being proud of his Roman citizenship (Acts 22:28). The apostle is seen preaching and teaching in Rome openly without hindrance as Acts draws to a close. It is possible to see in all this an attempt by Luke to calm Roman authorities' fears about any supposed subversive character of Christianity.

### **Luke's Sources**

Though Luke was not an eye-witness to the earthly life and ministry of Christ, he was in intimate contact with many who were. Luke was with Paul in Judea and Galilee in the late 50s, especially in Caesarea and Jerusalem (Acts 21:1-27:2). Members of the Jerusalem church (including James, the brother of Jesus, and Mary, Jesus' mother) would have provided much oral testimony. Luke's association with Paul brought him into contact with leading apostolic witnesses, including James and Peter, as well as fellow Gospel writers Matthew and Mark.

## **Synoptic – most of the time**

Out of a total of 1151 verses, Luke has 389 in common with Matthew and Mark, 176 in common with Matthew alone, 41 in common with Mark alone, leaving 544 unique to himself. In many instances all three use identical language. There are seventeen of Jesus' parables unique to Luke. Luke also records several miracles not found in Matthew and Mark:

- Two debtors—7:41-50
- The Good Samaritan—10:25-37
- The persistent friend—11:5-10
- The rich fool—12:13-21
- The barren fig tree—13:6-9
- The foolish builder—14:28-30
- The foolish king—14:31-33
- The lost sheep—15:1-7
- The lost coin—15:8-10
- The prodigal son—15:11-32
- The shrewd manager—16:1-8
- The rich man and Lazarus—16:19-31
- The humble servant—17:7-10
- The persistent widow—18:1-8
- The Pharisee and the tax collector—18:9-14

## **Jesus and the Women**

Also noteworthy is Luke's noting of Jesus's high regard for women. Mary and Elizabeth are central figures in chapters 1 and 2. Anna the prophetess and Joanna the disciple are mentioned only in Luke (2:36-38; 8:3; 24:10). Luke included the story of Christ's kind dealings with the widow of Nain (7:11-18) and the sinful woman who anointed Him (7:36-50). He also related Jesus' parable of the widow who persevered (18:1-8). The "Woman Caught In Adultery" passage found in John 8 almost certainly originated in Luke, was excised (perhaps due to fears of sexual permissiveness), but was incorporated into John's later Gospel.

## **Main Theme - Jesus, the Saviour of all**

- Men and women of all races are the objects of God's redeeming love in Christ (2:32; 4:21-30; 7:1-10; 13:29; 14:16-24; 24:44-49).
- Socially there is no distinction; Christ has come to save all (5:29-32; 9:51-56; 10:29-37; 17:11; 19:1-10; 23:43).
- Economically there is no distinction; Luke reveals Christ's love for the rich and poor (2:24; 7:22; 16:19-31).
- Luke emphasizes the truth that there is no limit to the love of God (15:11-32).
- In Christ, God entered human history. Jesus, the sinless Son of God, was born of a virgin (2:1-7), grew and matured as a human boy and young man (2:52), resisted Satan's temptations (4:1-13), taught and ministered among the people (4:14-21:38), was betrayed by Judas and deserted by his closest followers (22:1-62), was convicted and executed as a common criminal (22:63-23:56), rose from the dead (24:1-49), and ascended into heaven (24:50-51).

## **Chapter by chapter breakdown**

- 1: Events before Jesus' birth and birth of John the Baptist
- 2: The birth of Jesus and events during his childhood
- 3: John the Baptist's ministry and Jesus' baptism
- 4: Jesus' temptation, rejection at Nazareth, and early miracles
- 5: Miracles of Jesus and the calling of Levi
- 6: Jesus chooses the Twelve and teaches them
- 7: Two miracles, John the Baptist, and in the home of a Pharisee
- 8: The parable of the sower and three miracles
- 9: Feeding of the five thousand, Jesus' transfiguration, and Peter's confession
- 10: The mission of the 72 disciples and the parable of the Good Samaritan
- 11: The Lord's Prayer and further teaching
- 12: Jesus teaches a large crowd
- 13: A healing, three kingdom parables, and weeping over Jerusalem
- 14: Jesus teaches the Pharisees, and teaches about discipleship
- 15: The lost sheep, lost coin, and lost (Prodigal) son
- 16: Jesus teaches about money
- 17: Ten lepers cured, and teaching on the Second Coming
- 18: Jesus and prayer, children, sacrifice, and his own death and resurrection
- 19: Zacchaeus, entering Jerusalem, and cleansing the temple
- 20: Jesus' public teaching in Jerusalem
- 21: Jesus commends a widow, prophecies and commands watchfulness
- 22: The Last Supper, Gethsemane, and Peter's denial
- 23: Jesus' trials, crucifixion, and burial
- 24: Jesus' resurrection and ascension

**The Gospel of Social Concern** - (4:31-41; 5:12-26; 6:6-10, 17-19; 7:1-17; 8:28-39, 41-56; 9:1-2; 10:25-37; 13:10-17; 14:1-6; 16:19-31; 17:11-19; 18:35-43; 22:50-51).

Jesus showed tender sympathy to the poor, the despised, the hurt, and the sinful. No one was rejected or ignored by him. Jesus healed the sick, diseased, and crippled. His compassion reached across racial lines and broke with convention (ie healing on the Sabbath, 6:6-10).

Luke paid special attention to Jesus' treatment of the poor and his teachings about poverty and wealth, pointing out the dangers of wealth and the impossibility of serving both God and money ("woe" to the rich, 6:24-25; the parable of the rich fool, 12:16-21; the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, 16:19-31; the rich young man, 18:18-30; the Zacchaeus narrative, 19:1-10).

Jesus also emphasized God's special interest in the poor ("God blesses you who are poor," 6:20; giving to those in need, 12:32-34; inviting the poor, crippled, lame, and blind to the banquet, 14:21). And he commanded his followers to help the poor (4:18; 12:33; 14:13).