

# Gospel of Luke: *The Son of Man*

*"All that Jesus began to do and teach."*

**Luke's** Gospel is the longest book in the New Testament. Matthew's Gospel contains more chapters, but less text; however, Luke's chapters are longer. About one-half of the information found in Luke is not found in the other three Gospels.

Luke was uniquely equipped to be the author of the history of the Great Physician. Luke was not a disciple of Jesus during His earthly ministry. However, he had excellent opportunities to acquire all the authoritative information necessary for his two books because he was an intimate friend and traveling companion of the Apostle Paul. Luke was a Greek Christian and Gentile Medical Doctor (Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-21; 27:1-28:16) whom Paul addresses as "the beloved physician" (Colossians 4:10, 14; Philemon 24). He was a close companion and friend of the Apostle Paul who apparently stayed with him several years in Rome (2 Timothy 4:11), and Luke was with Paul when he was taken to Rome as prisoner of the Roman Emperor, and later was with Paul at the apostle's death (2 Timothy 4:11). Therefore, he had rich opportunities to obtain firsthand knowledge of the information contained in the Gospel as well as the Acts of the Apostles. He is probably the only Gentile (non Jewish) author in the New Testament.

**DATE & PLACE:** Luke wrote around A. D. 60, possibly at Caesarea during Paul's imprisonment (Acts 24:27), and before the fall of Jerusalem. Another possibility was at Rome while Paul was awaiting trial before Nero (A. D. 64). Luke would have had ample time to put the finishing touches on the Gospel before writing Acts.

**STYLE:** Luke is a scholarly, careful writer, with detailed observation, a cultured man with an unusually rich vocabulary, and is people-oriented. Luke 1:1-4 is the best Greek in N. T. From this passage we know he was not an eye-witness of what he wrote. However, he carefully sought out and evaluated the material he gathered. He contacted eyewitnesses (1:2), evaluated his evidence (1:3), and wrote under the guidance of the Holy Spirit with the goal that his friend Theophilus might be instructed in the truth about Jesus (1:4). Luke was an earnest research student who carefully and meticulously documented his writing. Luke wrote to fellow Greeks and made a great effort to provide explanations for various Jewish customs and feasts. He frequently substitutes Greek equivalents for Hebrew names. The author also comes across as unusually sensitive toward women, a man of prayer, a kind and humble man with a sympathetic heart for all people in need. The Gospel is saturated with an atmosphere of joy and praise.

The rich vocabulary, style and language of the Greek originals of Luke and Acts conclusively prove that the tradition is correct in ascribing both the Gospel of Luke and Acts to the same author. Acts 1:1 states the author of Acts is the same person as the author of the Gospel.

The historical trustworthiness of Luke is beyond question. No other historian of antiquity has been proven to be so remarkably reliable as this Greek physician. Luke attests to the fact that our Christian faith is based not on speculations of theories but on definite historical facts. Tradition could hardly be stronger. No doubts were ever raised towards Luke.

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Luke would have had many opportunities to discuss the work of the Gospel of Mark with its author because he knew Mark personally (cf. Colossians 4:10 and Philemon 24). Luke had access to a very wide range of reliable written material as well as oral sources of information. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls attests to the abundance of writings among religious Jewish circles about the time of the beginning of our Christian era. At Jerusalem, Caesarea and elsewhere, Luke with his inquiring mind and training would have made the best use of these unique opportunities to gather as much information as possible from the original sources and eyewitnesses of the life, death and resurrection of Christ. As a result we have in Luke's Gospel the most extensive and comprehensive account of the life of Christ.

**APPEAL:** The Gospel of Luke is universal in its appeal, and directed especially to Gentiles and Greeks in particular. Matthew, on the other hand, wrote primarily for the Jews, and Mark for the Romans.

**THEME:** Jesus the Son of Man came to offer salvation to the whole world (19:10). Luke presents Christ as the savior of the world. Luke applies the term "servant" of God in the sense in which Isaiah spoke of the Messiah as the *Ebed JHVH*.

**KEY VERSE:** Luke 19:10 reads, "The Son of Man has come to seek and save that which was lost."

**RECIPIENT:** The book is addressed to Theophilus, whose name means "friend of God" (1:3; Acts 1:1). He was probably a well-educated and important person, perhaps another physician. Luke realized that only when the Christian faith was based on absolutely reliable facts would it be able to win its way in the world. Luke fulfilled this urgent need for a firmly established truth in the field of religion among the highly educated people of his day. Religious men like Luke and Theophilus yearned for reliable knowledge regarding things eternal and spiritual.

**PURPOSE:** Luke's purpose is clearly stated in 1:1-4; 19:10. Here is the historical account of how the living God in His redeeming grace through Jesus Christ entered into the life of mankind, seeking to save the lost. This is not an ordinary detailed biography of our Lord. He only made use of material that served his purpose. His aim was to proclaim as clearly and powerfully as possible (in the limited space available in a parchment roll) Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as the all-sufficient Savior of the world. He progressively reveals the Son of God and Savior.

**KEY WORDS:** Watch for words like Son of Man, love and sinners.

### **UNIQUENESS OF LUKE'S GOSPEL:**

1. Jesus is our Kinsman redeemer. He is our next of kin who came to save us.
2. Christ is more than human; He is the Son of God.
3. Luke's Gospel is universal. This Gospel has a broader world vision than any other Gospel. It is a Gospel for all men everywhere. The Greeks' culture, concern for the body, and human beauty comes through in Luke. He presents Jesus as the Perfect Man who reveals the folly of sin and the beauty of holiness.
4. Luke is interested in people: individuals, social outcasts, women, children, social relationships, poverty and wealth. Jesus cares for the outcasts and oppressed. It has been called the "Gospel of Womanhood" (chapters 1 and 2; 7:11-13; 8:1-3; 10:38-42; 21:1-4; 23:27-31, 49). The ministry of women in the life of Christ is demonstrated. Luke has more to say about the poor, the neglected, and outcast than any other Gospel. Some

demonstrated. Luke has more to say about the poor, the neglected, and outcast than any other Gospel. Some examples are: Zacchaeus (19:1-10), the penitent thief (23:39-43), the prodigal son (15:11-32), the publican (18:9-14), the Good Samaritan (10:29-37), etc.

5. The author has a special interest in medicine (4:38; 7:15; 8:55; 14:2; 18:15; 22:50).

6. Luke places special interests on prayer and joyfulness. It is the Gospel of song, praise, and prayer. The prayers of Jesus are reported, along with parables that show the results of prayer, and commands by Jesus. Cf. 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28-29; 10:21; 11:1; 22:39-46; 23:34, 46. This Gospel is full of song (1:46-55; 1:67-79; 2:14; 2:29-32).

7. More references are found in Luke to the Holy Spirit than in Matthew and Mark combined. The Holy Spirit is seen empowering John the Baptist, Mary, Elizabeth, Zacharias, Simeon, and Jesus. With the ascension of Jesus at the end of the Gospel, the emphasis on the Spirit is further developed in the book of Acts beginning with chapter two. Luke's Gospel must always be considered with its sequel, the book of Acts.

8. Luke's purpose is theological: Jesus moves toward Jerusalem in order to die.

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