

Luke

Luke, a physician, builds his gospel narrative around an historical and chronological presentation of Jesus' life. Luke's gospel is the longest and most comprehensive of the four Gospels. It presents Jesus Christ as the Perfect Man who came to seek and save sinful men. Belief in Jesus and opposition to Jesus are developed side by side throughout the story. Those who believe the claims of Jesus are challenged to count the cost of discipleship. Those who oppose Jesus are not satisfied until He is lifeless on the cross. The resurrection ensures that Jesus' ministry of seeking and saving the lost will continue through His disciples once they are equipped with His power through the Holy Spirit.

INTRODUCTION

The message of Luke's gospel is captured in a simple phrase (Luke 19:10) as he carefully documents the perfect humanity of the Son of Man, Jesus Christ. Luke, a physician, writes with the compassion and warmth of an old family doctor while clearly and meticulously examining the facts. He states that his examination of Jesus of Nazareth leads to the same conclusion as John, that Jesus is God. Luke emphasizes Jesus' ancestry, birth, and early life before moving carefully and chronologically through His earthly ministry. Growing belief in Jesus and strong opposition to Jesus are developed side by side. In the end the Resurrection of Jesus fulfills His purpose "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10).

AUTHOR

Luke, the "beloved physician" (Colossians 4:14) writes his gospel from Mary's viewpoint, which confirms the tradition that he received his information for his gospel from her. It is evident from the introductions to Luke (1:1-4) and Acts (1:1-5) that both books were addressed to Theophilus as complimentary works. Acts begins with a summary of Luke (Luke is called "the former treatise") and continues the story from where the Gospel of Luke concludes.

Kata Loukon, "According to Luke," is the ancient title that was added to this gospel at a very early date. The Greek name *Luke* appears only 3 times in the New Testament (Colossians 4:14, 2 Timothy 4:11, Philemon 24).

DATE & SETTING

Luke was not an eyewitness of the events in his gospel, but he relied on the testimony of eyewitnesses and written sources (Luke 1:1-4). He carefully investigated, arranged, and presented his material to Theophilus ("loved by God" or "friend of God"). The title "most excellent" (Luke 1:3, Acts 23:26, 24:2, 26:25) most likely indicates the Theophilus was a man of high social standing and influence. Although nothing is known of Theophilus it is assumed that he took responsibility for publishing Luke and Acts so that they would be available to Gentile readers.

It is thought that Luke traveled in Palestine during Paul's two-year imprisonment in Caesarea for the purpose of gathering information from eyewitnesses of Jesus' ministry. The date of this gospel depends on that of Acts since this was the first of the complimentary works. It is commonly accepted that Luke was written prior to the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70). If Luke was written during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome it would be dated in the early 60's.