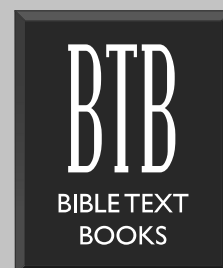




Luke

Mike Willis



The Book of Luke

By Mike Willis

Truth

Publications

*Taking His hand,
Helping each other home.*



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Cover Photo: This cover picture shows the Jordan River north of the Sea of Galilee, near Dan. Waters from four head waters flow into the Jordan before it enters the Sea of Galilee.

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The gospel of Luke is part of a two-volume work, its companion volume being Acts. The author of Luke-Acts wrote more pages in the New Testament than any other author. The two works are addressed to the same person, a man named Theophilus.

Facts about the Author

The name of Luke occurs three times in our New Testament. Colossians 4:14 identifies Luke as “the beloved physician” (his vocabulary and Greek sentence structure reflect a more educated author than most of the writers of other New Testament books) and distinguishes him from those “who are of the circumcision” (Col. 4:11-13). Philemon 24 names Luke as one of Paul’s companions while he was a prisoner at Rome. 2 Timothy 4:11 reveals that Luke was with Paul shortly before his death in Rome at the hand of the Roman emperor.

We can identify him as the author of Luke-Acts by the process of elimination (see *Introduction to the New Testament* by Everett F. Harrison, 196 to show how all others of Paul’s traveling companions are eliminated). The author of Acts was one of Paul’s traveling companions as shown by the “we” sections of Acts. He joined Paul at Troas on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:10) and accompanied him to Philippi where he stayed (Acts 17:1) until he rejoined him on Paul’s third journey (Acts 20:5, 6). He was a constant companion of Paul from then through the remainder of the book of Acts. The Lukan authorship of Luke-Acts is supported by early patristic writings.

Luke associations during this time gave him ample opportunity to discuss with eyewitnesses the events surrounding Jesus’ life and

the beginning of the church (Luke 1:1-2). When he accompanied Paul to Jerusalem, he had opportunity to meet and talk with many who were eyewitnesses of the Lord. Also, during Paul’s two year imprisonment at Caesarea (Acts 24:27), Luke had opportunity to associate with many Christians in the general vicinity who had personal contact with Jesus during his earthly life. He probably had opportunity to meet Mary, the Lord’s mother, and hear her account of the birth of Jesus.

Later, both Mark and Luke were with Paul in Rome (Phile. 24) where Mark and Luke had opportunity to associate with one another. Luke had opportunity to be exposed to the gospel that Mark had written, and may have been alluding to this in his opening comments—“Forasmuch as many (Mark and several others, mw) have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us.”

Introduction

Luke 1:1-4

Facts about the Recipient

Luke is written to one addressed as “most excellent Theophilus” (1:3). Acts drops the designation “most excellent.” The designation suggests that Theophilus was some important Roman of-



This picture shows the location where Paul was imprisoned at Caesarea.

icial. There is insufficient evidence to conclude anything more definite concerning Theophilus.

Date of the Books

To determine a precise date when Luke or Acts was written is impossible. However, these facts seem evident. When Acts was completed, the outcome of Paul’s trial was not known; Paul was still alive and in a Roman prison. He quoted from Luke’s Gospel (Luke

10:7) in 1 Timothy 5:18. Inasmuch as his death is generally considered to have occurred in AD 66, the book of Acts is not likely to have been written after that date. Luke was written before the hook of Acts (Acts 1:1). Two dates for Luke are generally suggested for those who thus date Acts: (1) AD 58 during the two years that Paul was in prison in Caesarea (Thiessen, *Introduction To*



This is the inside of the Mamertine prison where Paul was imprisoned prior to his execution.

The New Testament, 158); (2) in the early 60s while Paul was in prison in Rome. If either of these dates is accepted, it throws the book of Mark back even earlier since Luke seems to rely heavily on Mark's gospel.

Canonicity

The book of Luke was widely used among Christians by the middle of the second century. In his *Introduction to the New Testament*, Hency C. Thiessen said, "It is manifest that in all parts of the Christian world the Third Gospel had been recognized as authoritative before the middle of the second century, and that it was universally believed to be the work of Luke" (151). Paul's quotation from Luke's Gospel in 1 Timothy 5:18, in which he

calls it "scripture" and parallels it to an Old Testament quotation, puts the canonicity of the book beyond doubt; a Holy Spirit inspired apostle labels Luke's Gospel as Scripture.

Peculiarities In Luke's Gospel

1. The book of Luke does not follow a strict chronological order in its record of the life of Jesus. In many areas, the arrangement is topical rather than chronological. R.C.H. Lenski commented, "Luke does not follow the chronological order of events except in certain sections and especially where this is necessary because of the nature of what is recorded" (*Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel*, 19).

2. The Gospel of Luke is apparently addressed to Gentiles and seeks to address its message to men of every race, not primarily to a Jewish audience (as Matthew's Gospel). Luke traces Jesus' genealogy back, not to Abraham, but to Adam, the father of all mankind. Luke emphasizes the role of gentiles in his Gospel.

His is the cosmopolitan Gospel; he speaks of the "good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people" (2:10). He represents Simeon as saying of Christ that He is, "A light to lighten the Gentiles" (2:32). The widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian are mentioned only by Luke (4:25-27). He alone relates the parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25-37); he alone tells of the Samaritan who returned to praise

God (17:16); he alone speaks of the "times of the Gentiles" (21:24) (Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 157).

3. The Gospel of Luke has a particular concern for the poor, lowly, and under privileged (4:18; 6:20-21; 8:1-3).

4. The Gospel of Luke emphasizes the Holy Spirit (4:1, 14; 11:13; cf. parallels).

5. The Gospel of Luke emphasizes prayer (3:21; 6:12; 9:28). Additional peculiarities could be cited.

6. The Gospel of Luke may be classified as apologetic literature. This refers to a kind of literature in which the author would mount a defense for a person or social group. In Luke, the author provides an apologetic to tell us who Jesus was and in Acts a defense of his disciples, the church.

7. Luke's gospel is a biographical narrative which includes both the birth and death of Jesus.

The Life of Jesus Rests on Historical Evidence

The record of the life, miracles, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ rests on solid historical evidence. Luke's account was written within 30-35 years of the events reported. The historian consulted the eyewitnesses, many of whom were still living when he wrote his book. His record is written in the framework of history (cf. 1:5; 2:1; 3:1-2) and in geographical locations easily identifiable. This stands in contrast to fiction which opens, "Long, long ago in a land far away. . . ." No one knows when "long, long ago" was or where "a land far away" is. On the other hand, Jesus lived at a specified period of time and in a specified place.

In the areas in which historians have been able to check the histori-

cal accurateness of Luke, he has always been shown to be a historian of the highest caliber. J.A. Thompson observed, "Luke is shown to be a most careful recorder of information, whether it be matters of geog-

raphy and political boundaries, local customs, titles of local officers, local religious practices, details of local topography, or the disposition of buildings in Greek or Roman, Asian or European towns" (*The*

Bible and Archaeology, 402-403). We may rest assured, therefore, that what the Gospel of Luke records is historical fact as reported by a very competent historian.

Questions

1. Who was Theophilus? _____
2. What two dates are suggested for when Luke wrote his Gospel? _____
3. How early is the evidence which indicates that Luke was received as an inspired book? _____

Multiple Choice

- _____ 1. The man who wrote the most books of the New Testament was (a) Luke, (b) John, (c) Paul.
- _____ 2. The man who wrote the most volume of the New Testament was (a) Luke, (b) John, (c) Paul.
- _____ 3. Luke was a (a) Samaritan, (b) Jew, (c) Gentile.
- _____ 4. He had association with (a) Paul, (b) John Mark, (c) eyewitnesses of Jesus, (d) all of the above.
- _____ 5. Luke first joined Paul's company at (a) Ephesus, (b) Antioch, (c) Troas, (d) Philippi.

Matching

Match the Scripture which proves each of the following statements.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| _____ 1. Luke was a physician. | a. Acts 16:10 |
| _____ 2. Luke was a Gentile. | b. Acts 1:1 |
| _____ 3. Luke traveled with Paul. | c. Col. 4:14 |
| _____ 4. Luke associated with Mark. | d. Col. 4:11-14 |
| _____ 5. Luke also wrote Acts. | e. Philemon 24 |

Discussion

1. What evidences in Luke's writings point to his Gentile background? _____

2. What was his purpose in emphasizing Gentiles and Samaritans? _____

3. How is any historical event established as fact? Why do you accept Luke's Gospel as historical? _____

4. What advantage did Luke's background give him in reporting the life of Christ? _____

5. List the things which date the birth and early ministry of Jesus. Consult an encyclopedia or dictionary to date the things mentioned by Luke (cf. 1:5; 2:1; 3:1-2). _____
