



THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

The Gospel according to Luke is the first part of a two-volume work that continues the biblical history of God's dealings with humanity found in the Old Testament, showing how God's promises to Israel have been fulfilled in Jesus and how the salvation promised to Israel and accomplished by Jesus has been extended to the Gentiles.

The stated purpose of the two volumes is to provide Theophilus and others like him with certainty—assurance—about earlier instruction they have received.

To accomplish his purpose, Luke shows that the preaching and teaching of the representatives of the early church are grounded in the preaching and teaching of Jesus, who during his historical ministry prepared his

specially chosen followers and commissioned them to be witnesses to his resurrection and to all else that he did.

This continuity between the historical ministry of Jesus and the ministry of the apostles is Luke's way of guaranteeing the fidelity of the Church's teaching to the teaching of Jesus.

Luke's story of Jesus and the church is dominated by a historical perspective. This history is first of all salvation history.

God's divine plan for human salvation was accomplished during the period of Jesus, who through the events of his life fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies; and this salvation is now extended to all humanity in the period of the church (. This salvation history, moreover, is a part of human history.

Luke relates the story of Jesus and the church to events in contemporary Palestinian and Roman' history for, as Paul says in, "this was not done in a corner." Finally, Luke relates the story of Jesus and the church to contemporaneous church history.

Luke is concerned with presenting Christianity as a legitimate form of worship in the Roman world, a religion that is capable of meeting the spiritual needs of a world empire like that of Rome.

To this end, Luke depicts the Roman governor Pilate declaring Jesus to be innocent of any wrongdoing three times.

At the same time Luke argues in Acts that Christianity is the logical development and proper fulfillment of Judaism and is therefore deserving of the same toleration and freedom traditionally accorded Judaism by Rome.

The prominence given to the period of the church in the story has important consequences for Luke's interpretation of the teachings of Jesus.

By presenting the time of the church as a distinct phase of salvation history, Luke accordingly shifts the early Christian emphasis away from the expectation of an imminent Parousia to the day-to-day concerns of the Christian community in the world. He does this in the gospel by regularly emphasizing the words "each day" in the sayings of Jesus. Although Luke still believes the Parousia to be a reality that will come unexpectedly, he is more concerned with presenting the words and deeds of Jesus as guides for the conduct of Christian disciples in the interim period between the ascension and the Parousia and with presenting Jesus himself as the model of Christian life and piety.

Throughout the gospel, Luke calls upon the Christian disciple to identify with the master Jesus, who is caring and tender toward the poor and lowly, the outcast, the sinner, and the afflicted, toward all those who recognize their dependence on God, but who is severe toward the proud and self-righteous, and particularly toward those who place their material wealth before the service of God and his people.

No gospel writer is more concerned than Luke with the mercy and compassion of Jesus.

No gospel writer is more concerned with the role of the Spirit in the life of Jesus and the Christian disciple, with the importance of prayer, or with Jesus' concern for women. While Jesus calls all humanity to repent, he is particularly demanding of those who would be his disciples. Of them he demands absolute and total detachment from family and material possessions.

To all who respond in faith and repentance to the word Jesus preaches, he brings salvation, peace and life.

Early Christian tradition, from the late second century on, identifies the author of this gospel and of the Acts of the Apostles as Luke, a Syrian from Antioch, who is mentioned in the New Testament in Col 4:14, Phlm 24 and 2 Tm 4:11.

The prologue of the gospel makes it clear that

Luke is not part of the first generation of Christian disciples

but is himself dependent upon the traditions he received from those who were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word (Lk 1:2).

His two-volume work marks him as someone who was highly literate both in the Old Testament traditions according to the Greek versions and in Hellenistic Greek writings.

Among the likely sources for the composition of this gospel (Lk 1:3) were the Gospel of Mark, a written collection of sayings of Jesus known also to the author of the Gospel of Matthew (Q; see Introduction to Matthew), and other special traditions that were used by Luke alone among the gospel writers.

Some hold that Luke used Mark only as a complementary source for rounding out the material he took from other traditions. Because of its dependence on the Gospel of Mark and because details in Luke's Gospel, imply that the author was acquainted with the destruction of the city of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70, the Gospel of Luke

is dated by most scholars after that date; many propose A.D. 80–90 as the time of composition.

Luke's consistent substitution of Greek names for the Aramaic or Hebrew names occurring in his sources, his omission from the gospel of specifically Jewish Christian concerns found in his sources, his interest in Gentile Christians, and his incomplete knowledge of Palestinian geography, customs, and practices are among the characteristics of this gospel that suggest that Luke was a non-Palestinian writing to a non-Palestinian audience that was largely made up of Gentile Christians.

The principal divisions of the Gospel according to Luke are the following:

- I. **The Prologue (1:1–4)**
- II. **The Infancy Narrative (1:5–2:52)**
- III. **The Preparation for the Public Ministry
(3:1–4:13)**
- IV. **The Ministry in Galilee (4:14–9:50)**
- V. **The Journey to Jerusalem:
Luke's Travel Narrative (9:51–19:27)**
- VI. **The Teaching Ministry in Jerusalem
(19:28–21:38)**
- VII. **The Passion Narrative (22:1–23:56)**
- VIII. **The Resurrection Narrative (24:1–53)**