



15a. Luke, the Compassionate and Detailed Evangelist

Cappella Tornabuoni, "St. Luke the Evangelist," 1486-90

"Although Matthew is divided into more chapters than Luke, Luke's account of the ministry of Jesus Christ is the longest of the four canonical Gospels in actual length . . . Although Luke clearly drew upon Mark and has much in common with Matthew, Luke's Gospel also contains a large amount of unique material. Furthermore, its style and sensitivities—particularly toward women, Gentiles, and the poor and oppressed generally—set it apart from the other synoptic Gospels." (Holzapfel, Huntsman, and Wayment, *Jesus Christ and the World of the New Testament*, 108)

Authorship, Internal Evidence

What does the text itself tell us about who wrote Luke?

- No direct evidence
 - gospel is **anonymous**
 - subscriptions at the end of earliest manuscripts are no earlier than the end of 2nd century A.D., titles (superscriptions) are later
- Indirect evidence
 - Author was **not an eyewitness** but depended on others for his information (1:2-3)
 - "Even as **they** delivered them unto **us**, **which from the beginning were eyewitnesses**, and ministers of the word
 - The Greek syntax makes it clear that the **eyewitnesses** were the ones who delivered these things to the **author** and **those with him**
 - Judging from quality of the Greek, **the author had a thorough, Hellenistic education**
 - **Sympathy with and attention to Gentiles and outsiders** suggests that the author was not a Palestinian, or even a Diaspora, Jew
 - **Probably a Greek** or a cultural Greek of Syrian or other background

Authorship, External Evidence

What do others tell us about who wrote Luke?

- Book of Acts (claims to be a continuation of Third Gospel, style is the same)
 - The author **appears to have been a companion of Paul**, because the “**we-sections**” occur in descriptions of the events that described Paul’s apostolic activities (Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:6).
 - This could, however, be due to the author’s source or Classical rhetorical conventions
- Patristic (early Church father) evidence
 - The Muratorian canon (c. 170) states, “**Luke, the physician...wrote in his own name what he had been told (ex opinione), though he himself had not seen the Lord in the flesh.**”
 - Irenaeus (130-c.200) writes, “**Luke the companion of Paul set forth in a book the gospel as preached by him (Paul)**” (Adv. Haer. 3.1.1; see also Adv. Haer. 3. 14.1-3).
 - Clement of Alexandria (150-215) attributes the Book of Acts to Luke: “As **Luke** in the Acts of the Apostles relates that Paul said...” (Strom. 5.12).
 - Tertullian (c. 160-225) attributes the Gospel of Luke to **Luke** (Adv. Marc. 4.2.1-5).
- Luke in Paul
 - Philemon 1:24, 2 Tim 4:11, and Col 4:14 list **Luke among Paul’s “fellow workers”**

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Luke the Physician

- No reason not to accept Lucan authorship
 - Patristic identification of Luke does not conflict with the other external evidence
 - **External evidence is consistent with the internal evidence**
- Luke’s Background
 - Col 4:14 calls Luke “**the beloved physician**”
 - A medical background for Luke is consistent with **the author’s interest in physiology, empirical proofs**, etc. (e.g. treatment of the woman with the issue of blood and the resurrection narrative)
 - The Anti-Marcion Prologue (second century) says that **Luke the physician** from Antioch, Syria wrote the gospel.
 - Antioch was the headquarters of the first gentile mission, Luke could have become associated with Paul there
 - **Already a “God-fearer,”** or Gentile who accepted Jehovah, before he became a Christian?
 - Despite Gentile background, Luke is **very familiar with the Jewish scriptures in their Greek translation**, and in Acts **highlights the role of “God-fearers”** who believed in Judaism but did not become proselytes but who readily accept Christ

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Luke's Original Audience

- **Dedicated to "Theophilus"**
 - the name means "friend of God" but is not generally attested as a Greek name until the Byzantine later (much later)
 - Indicative of the status of Luke's patron as a member or serious investigator?
 - **A type representing all "friends of God?"**
- **Presumably Gentile**
 - Avoids technical Jewish terms and titles, includes Gentiles more readily
- **Probably already Christian**
 - "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of **those things which are most surely believed among us** . . . It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, **wherein thou hast been instructed.**" (Luke 1:1–4)

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Dating Luke

- More difficult to date than Mark or Matthew
- R.L. Anderson (packet) places the Gospel of Luke **as early as A.D. 63**
 - Must have been completed before Acts, which Anderson maintains is "unfinished" or at least written before Paul's martyrdom
 - Paul was executed anytime between AD 64 and 68
- Secular scholarship usually places Luke **after A.D. 70**, even in the 80's
 - Luke has detailed knowledge of the destruction of the temple
 - But this position does not accept the "predicative nature of prophecy"
- **Luke certainly seems to be after Mark and probably Matthew**

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Gospel Sources: Luke

Early Disciples and Witnesses

Jesus Christ

Family Members

Kerygma

Sayings

Hymns
(including canticles)

REVELATION
(See John 14:26; Galatians 1:12)

Peter

Matthew

Paul

Gospel of Mark

Gospel of Matthew

Gospel of Luke

- Following the **basic outline of Mark** and including **many of the Sayings of Jesus** also found in Matthew, the Gospel of Luke includes **events and teachings unique to this gospel**
 - Luke seems to preserve certain **family traditions** about Jesus as well as four **canticles or hymns** in his infancy narrative

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Composing Luke

- **Two-Source Theory**
 - Suggests that Matthew and Luke both used Mark and another, now-lost, body of sayings of Jesus called "Q" (from the German *Quelle* for "source")
 - **Luke = Mark + Q + L**
- **Three-Stage Theory**
 - Proposes that Mark wrote his gospel, which served as an inspiration for Matthew's
 - **Matthew used his own (or Q's) discourse material**
 - Luke used Mark and Matthew (or just Matthew) as his base adding additional **material from his unique sources**
 - **Luke = Matthew + L**

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Luke's Sources

- “Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were **eyewitnesses**, and ministers of the word” (1:2)
- **Paul**, Luke's missionary companion and teacher
 - Paul was not an eyewitness, but he knew the early Christian *kērygma* well
 - **Luke's Last Supper account parallels 1 Corinthians 11 closely**
- **John?**
 - Also Last Supper similarities here
 - *Closer to John than theologically than any other gospel*
- Early Christian witnesses per Act 21
 - Philip the Evangelist (Acts 21:8 < chs 6 and 8)
 - Agabus (Acts 21:10 < ch. 11)
 - Mnason (Acts 21:6 *archaios*)
 - **James the brother of the Lord** (Acts 21:18)
- Other family members?

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Style and Characteristics

- “Classicizing” Greek
 - A literary style, more than the usual *Koine*
 - **Luke-Acts better than any Greek in the NT except perhaps Hebrews**
- Luke knew Septuagint (LXX) well and uses it frequently
 - **Even imitates its style in Luke 1–2**
 - Perhaps a proselyte to Judaism before becoming a Christian
- **Concern for the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized**
- **Eliminates or modifies unflattering accounts of apostles and Jesus' family**
 - E.g., downplays Peter's faults, disciples only fall asleep once at the garden
- **More reverential in treatment of Jesus**
 - Eliminates passages that could portray him as emotional, harsh, or weak
- Writes “**in order**,” omitting Marcan sections for clearer progression
 - “It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order . . . (1:3)
 - **Puts most of his extra material in the “Journey to Jerusalem” section**

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Lucan Christology

- The Person of Jesus
 - Like Matthew, Luke begins with **an Infancy Narrative** to emphasize **Jesus' divine conception and miraculous birth**
 - Emphasis on **Jesus as the Son of God** (e.g. Luke genealogy of Jesus)
- The Work of Jesus
 - **A compassionate, healing Savior**
 - "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to **preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised**, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18–19)
 - Emphasis on the terms "save," "Savior," and "salvation"
 - **His concern and mercy for others are prominent even during the central acts of his suffering and death**
 - **Suffered in Gethsamene** (more details on this than any other gospel), **died on Calvary**, and **rose triumphantly from the tomb**

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Purpose of Luke's gospel

- Verify **what had been preached** (*kērygma*) and what other gospel authors have written
- Establish **the position of Jesus Christ in "Theological History"** (*Heilsgeschichte*)
 - God working in Israel (Luke 1–2)
 - God working in the person of Jesus (body of Luke)
 - God continuing to work through the Church (Luke 24; Acts)
- Unique contributions
 - Infancy narrative, particularly material from family's point of view
 - **Parables on love: reveal Luke's lack of racial or sexual bias**
 - Last Supper treatment (Paul and possibly John as sources)
 - Trial narrative (familiar with Roman practices, interested in details)
 - **Most detailed resurrection account**

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Structure

- Prologue (1:1–4)
 - a Hellenistic addition, very literary (and difficult in Greek!)
- **Infancy and “Boyhood” Narrative (1:5–2:52)**
- **Body**
 - Preparation for Ministry (3:1–4:13)
 - Galilean Ministry (4:14–9:50)
 - Starts in Nazareth
 - **Beginning the Journey to Jerusalem (9:51–13:21)**
 - Much unique material here and in the next section
 - **The Journey Towards Jerusalem Continues: The Peraean Ministry (13:22–19:27)**
 - Jerusalem Ministry (19:11–21:38)
- **Passion Narrative (22:1–23:56)**
- **Resurrection Narrative (24:1–53)**
- *The body of Luke's gospel is framed, as is Matthew's, with the **Infancy Narrative** at the beginning and the **Passion and Resurrection Narratives** at the end, answering the **Christological questions of who Jesus is and what he did for our salvation***