



The Gospel of Luke

*“So That You May Know the Certainty of
the Things You Have Been Taught”*

Introductions

(1) Tour Guides

- Andrew Fuller
- Grant Holbrook
- Jennifer Parham

(2) All of You

Group Discussion

- (1) If you were part of this class last year, what stood out for you: a particular passage? a teaching tool or style (e.g., using artwork, close study of the language,)? a particular theme in Luke's Gospel? the sense of community? the discussion? practical applications?
- (2) What would you most like to see happen here this year?

Why Study Luke?

Luke is tailor-made for our modern world:

- (1) It discusses in detail how the promise of God through Jesus expanded to include the Gentiles. *Luke* sets the table for the message of reconciliation and the possibility of healthy relationships, even across ethnic lines, that should be the result of a response to the Gospel;
- (2) It contains numerous parables no other Gospel writer captured;
- (3) It has a sequel (*Acts*) to explain how Jesus's ministry relates to the development of The New Community that became the church; and
- (4) Its significant themes include the ethics of relationships and the impact of wealth and materialism on discipleship.

What is a Gospel?¹

- A theological narrative
- Teaches by telling a story
- Theology revealed in the context of life, clothed in flesh and blood

¹Darrell L. Bock, *The IVP New Testament Commentary: Luke* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984) 15.

Date and Place

- Strong scholarship suggests *Luke* and its companion volume, *Acts*, were written together before Paul's death in AD67, though some scholars suggest AD70-90 (after the fall of Jerusalem).
- Both volumes were probably written from Rome. Achaia, Ephesus and Caesarea are also possibilities.
- 24 chapters, 1151 verses

Author

- The author is never named, but scholars and early church history almost universally attribute the Gospel to Paul's traveling companion and friend, Luke.
- The author was not an eyewitness to all of the events about which he wrote (none in *Luke*, only the "we" passages in *Acts* (16:10-17, 20:5-15, 21:1-18, 27:1, 28:16), which show he was a companion of Paul.
- Luke was probably a Gentile, though possibly a non-Jewish Semite or Hellenistic Jew (though Paul doesn't list Luke in Col 4:10-11 as one of the Jews among Paul's fellow-workers).
- If Luke was a Gentile, it makes him the only non-Jewish writer of the New Testament.
- Luke was an investigative reporter (Matthew = Biblical scholar, Mark = storyteller) and a physician. He was well educated in Greek culture. He was a loyal friend and companion to Paul at various times from 2nd missionary journey to his final imprisonment in Rome. Luke remained with Paul after others had deserted him (2 Tim 4:11).
- Luke was likely from Syrian Antioch or Philippi.

Luke's Unique Perspective

- We see his doctor's eye for detail and journalist's passion for getting the facts straight.
- Luke relied on other writings (e.g. *Mark*) but also used personal investigation based on testimony from "eyewitnesses and servants of the word" (1:2).
- Luke had an outstanding command of the Greek language. He used an extensive and rich vocabulary. His writing style at times approaches that of classical Greek (e.g. 1:1-4) but at other times is less classical and more Semitic (e.g. 1:5-2:52).
- Luke included significant distinctive materials (e.g. 10:1-18:14 and 19:1-28) that indicate his work was independent of other Gospel writers.
- As a Gentile, Luke's very presence gives a pluralistic perspective to the ministry of Jesus and explains his focus on Gentile issues in his Gospel and in *Acts*.
- He writes for the benefit of fellow Gentiles who want and need to know Jesus.
- He shows special concern for people who are marginalized by society—women, children, poor.
- He includes many passages unique to *Luke* that feature the welcoming of outcasts (e.g. Christmas shepherds, Prodigal Son, persistent widow, Zacchaeus).

Luke 1:1-4 (NIV)

¹ Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, ² just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. ³ Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

Acts 1:1-2 (NIV)

¹ In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach ² until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.

Audience

- It's written to a specific person, Theophilus, whose name means "one who loves God" and almost certainly refers to a particular person rather than to lovers of God in general.
- Luke's use of "most excellent" further indicates an individual and supports the idea that Theophilus was a Roman official or at least of high position and wealth and possibly Luke's patron (such a dedication to the publisher was common at that time).
- It appears Theophilus needed reassurance as someone who was already a follower of Jesus (Luke contains a lot of material on persisting in the faith).
- Theophilus was probably a Gentile, hence Luke's focus on the inclusion of Gentiles in the Kingdom of God.

Purpose

- Message of this Gospel was intended for Theophilus's own instruction (1:4), but also for the instruction of those to whom the book would be circulated
- Written to strengthen the faith of all believers and to answer the attacks of unbelievers; it's the "Gospel of knowing for sure"
- Shows that the place of the Gentile Christian in God's kingdom is based on the teaching of Jesus
- Commends the preaching of the Gospel to the whole world
- Explains what a vibrant disciple looks like and how a believer lives in the larger, often hostile world

The “New Community”

- Those who share the faith form a New Community, not because they sought to be separate from Israel and the Jews but because they were forced to become a new community through rejection.
- We see the nature of New Community life in Luke’s various emphases: the call to love (6:20-48), prayer (11:1-13; 18:1-14), the call to perseverance (8:13-15; 9:23; 18:8; 21:19); and the need to avoid obstacles to discipleship like excessive attachment to wealth (8:14; 12:13-21; 16:1-15,19,31; 18:18-25). The theme of The New Community is similar to Ephesians.
- Luke writes to reassure Theophilus in his faith and to encourage him to reflect the characteristics of The New Community.

Major Themes

- Incarnation (“Son of Man”)
- Salvation through Christ
- Kingdom of God
- Holy Spirit
- Forgiveness
- Missions and evangelism
- Prayer

Outline of the Gospel of Luke

- Preface: An Invitation to be Reassured (1:1-4)
- Infancy Narratives (1:5-2:52)
- John's Preaching /Jesus' Qualifications for Ministry (3:1-4:13)
- Galilean Ministry: The Revelation of Jesus (4:14-9:50)
- The Journey to Jerusalem (9:51-19:44)
- Jerusalem: The Innocent Slain and Raised (19:45-24:53)

Where We've Been

Highlights from Andrew

I finished off last year with two sessions on 'mission' - Jesus sends out the 72, and the feeding of the five thousand. I pointed to the fact that the early chapters lay the groundwork for faith in the believer and with it for the proclamation of the Kingdom. And then at chapters 9/10 there is a sort of 'hinge' from which the focus becomes more on moving out, but obviously with the continued narrative that leads to the accomplishment of the earthly ministry of Christ.

Highlights from Grant

- **Luke 4:18-19: Jesus' self-declared mission statement** (unique to Luke): I think my emphasis on the Nazareth synagogue reading of Isaiah was a nice parallel to Jennifer's initial emphasis on Luke's own mission for writing to Theophilus ("so that you may know the certainty...")
- **Inside-out and upside-down:** It seemed providential that almost every week that I taught I ended up with a story about narrative reversal that connected to the reversals of the Nazareth synagogue declaration. I focused quite a bit on marginal characters being healed/restored in the midst of their own communities and brought to the center of the kingdom. Off the top of my head, the so-called leprosy (we had a lively discussion about Hanson's disease that day), the Sermon on the Plain, the healing of the centurion's slave, and probably my favorite-- the woman with ointment in 7:36-50. This could be phrased any number of ways-- Jesus' own prompting of marginal characters to move toward the center, the reordering of society around Jesus' bringing salvation where it was so desperately needed.

Highlights from Jennifer

- Over and over in Luke, we see this pattern of “inside out and upside down” Grant mentioned, and this is, for me, one of the most fascinating parts of the Gospel of Luke.
- Luke shows us, over and over again, that the Kingdom Jesus preached was something entirely new. It’s an altogether New Community– where tax collectors become disciples; where the crippled, lame, demon-possessed and weak are healed and set free; where non-Jews’ faith is rewarded; where ordinary men (Peter, James and John) encounter extraordinary men of God (Jesus, Moses and Elijah); where outcasts are welcomed into fellowship; and where those who are least in the eyes of man are the greatest in the eyes of God.
- In his Gospel, Luke captures Jesus’ creation of The New Community. In his sequel (Acts), Luke captures the explosive growth and expansion of The New Community from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

Where We're Headed

- Next week- Andrew teaching
- Sept. 27- Grant teaching
- Oct. 4- JP teaching