

Message#1**Various Texts**

In my life, I will never forget the first time I sat in a class taught by John Miles. The class was held in the Library building and it was a freshman class which was a one year course that gave all freshmen an overview of all the major doctrines.

I didn't know a thing about the class or Mr. Miles. All I knew is that this was an academic requirement. We had to purchase a doctrine notebook and workbook for the class, so when I went into the class I had my notebook, workbook, pencil and pen and a Bible.

A few minutes after I found a seat, Mr. Miles walked into the room. He had a distinguished look about him. He was not a large man and he had white hair. He passed out a syllabus and briefly covered it. We had a word of prayer and then he began a lecture on the importance of doctrine. There was nothing flashy or bombastic about his speaking style, but there was real power and depth in what he was teaching and when that lecture was over, I realized this is no lightweight of a man, this is a powerful and profound man of God.

The gospel of Luke is like that. When you first come to Luke's gospel, you don't find it to be dynamically theological like Paul. You don't find it to be dynamically emotional like Peter. You don't find his gospel to be dynamically apologetic like John. You don't find it to be fast-paced like Mark. What you do find is a man who sets out to tell a very complete and accurate story of Jesus Christ.

And after you have gone through this book you soon realize you have been in the presence of something very special and very sacred. You begin to sense this book is not shallow, but very deep. This is a book that will impact you and when our journey is over, this book is life-changing.

There are three New Testament books that are very similar in the material order they present concerning the life of Christ. In fact, these books are so similar that they have been called synoptic gospels because of this. The three books are Matthew, Mark and Luke. Of the three books and portraits of the life of Jesus Christ, **the gospel of Luke is the most graphic, the most thorough and the most detailed.**

William Barclay said one time James Denny, a Scottish theologian of the late 1800's, was once asked if he could recommend a good study on the life of Jesus Christ. Barclay said, Mr. Denny replied, "have you tried the one Luke wrote" (*Luke*, p. 3).

No other Gospel writer has such an eye for detail. No other Gospel writer went to the depth level extent in research. Luke was a man of real scholarship, real depth and real spirituality. In fact, the Gospel of Luke has been called "the best life of Christ ever written."

So in the next weeks we would like to take you through this amazing document. To introduce us to the book, we begin by asking a series of six introductory questions.

Back in 1902, Rudyard Kipling wrote a poem: “I keep six honest serving men, they taught me all I knew, their names are what and why and when and how and where and who.” This became a standard for journalism in the early 1900’s and it is a good way to begin a study of a book of the Bible—ask and answer those questions:

QUESTION #1 – Why study Luke?

We present four reasons for studying Luke.

Reason #1 - Because Luke is one of only 66 inspired books that God gave to man.

This is the only reason we ever need for studying any book of the Bible. The fact that Luke is an inspired book of God is easily proved:

(Proof #1) - The preservation of Greek manuscripts.

In the important collection of N.T. manuscripts known as the Chester Beatty Papyri (A.D. 250), Luke is found in p45. In the Bodmer Papyri (second-third century) is a manuscript dated A.D. 175-225 and it contains 102 pages that are 10 ¼ inches by 5 1/3 inches and in that manuscript is most of the entire gospel of Luke written in all capital Greek letters.

After the Roman Emperor Constantine became a believer (A.D. 312), one of the first things he did was authorize multiple copies of the Bible to be made. The oldest known Biblical manuscript written in capital letters and printed on parchment or vellum (animal skin) is the Codex Vaticanus copied in about A.D. 312. In that Greek manuscript is the Gospel of Luke. Luke is actually divided into 152 sections.

In the mid 1800’s, a Greek manuscript was discovered in a monastery at Mount Sinai (Codex Sinaiticus) that was copied about A.D. 340. The manuscript is written in all Greek capital letters on 364 ½ pages that are 13 ½ inches by 14 inches. In that manuscript is an entire copy of Luke.

This is just a few of the many manuscript evidences that God preserved His Word.

(Proof #2) - The testimony of early church leaders.

Luke was cited as belonging in the Word of God or actually cited as being an inspired book by key early church individuals such as Justin Martyr (A.D. 150), Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 150), Tertullian (A.D. 150), Origen (A.D. 185), Eusebius (A.D. 325), Jerome (A.D. 340) and Augustine (A.D. 400).

(Proof #3) - The canon listings of the inspired books of the Bible.

Luke is the only gospel that is named as authentic in all canon listings—Marcion (A.D. 140), Muratorian (A.D. 170), Apostolic (A.D. 300), Cheltenham (A.D. 360) and Athanasius (A.D. 367).

(Proof #4) - The church councils that met to determine which books were inspired by God.

It was named to be an authentic inspired book by all church councils: Nicea (A.D. 325), Hippo (A.D. 393), Carthage (A.D. 397) and Carthage (A.D. 419).

This is a very rare inspired book of God. Well-preserved and well-documented. I am convinced of this when our life is over the best use of our time will have been time devoted to understanding the Bible.

Reason #2 - Because Luke is the most detailed account of the life of Jesus Christ.

There are four gospels that tell the story of the life of Jesus Christ: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Of the four, Luke gives the most detailed account of all.

Luke covers more history of Christ's life, he uses more new words to describe it than any other writer and he tells more of Christ's parables and gives more of his teachings than any other writer.

Dr. William Hendricksen, in his commentary on Luke, cites 82 new pieces of information concerning the life of Christ that we glean from Luke (*The Gospel of Luke*, pp. 18-21).

The fact that there is more data in this gospel and the fact that it is inspired by God makes this an exciting potential journey.

Reason #3 - Because as Grace Age believers, we are to be like Jesus Christ in many ways.

We are to develop a mindset that is like that of Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:5); we are to at times suffer like Jesus Christ (II Tim. 2:3; Phil. 1:29) and we are to follow Jesus Christ at times through hardships (I Pet. 2:21). Peter says we are to follow in His steps.

Well a good place to begin is the book that gives us the most detailed look at Jesus Christ and His steps and that book is Luke.

Reason #4 - Because Luke is a book in which we learn much about God.

In this gospel we learn God controls every bit of history—past, present future. We learn that God fulfills every prophecy literally. We learn that Jesus Christ is God and He has tremendous saving power. We see amazing displays of Christ's power over the universe, angels, Satan and sin. When we go through Luke we learn much about God.

QUESTION #2 – Who was Luke?

Luke is not once named in this gospel of Luke and he is only named three times in the entire New Testament (Col. 4:14; II Tim. 4:11; Phil. 24). But there is much we know about him. Eight facts we may observe:

Fact #1 - Luke was a believing Gentile. **Col. 4:10-14**

Luke was not a Jew, which means he is the only writer of a book in the Bible who was not Jewish. Luke would have known what it was like to be a Gentile outsider. He knew what it was like to be treated like he didn't belong and perhaps that is why his gospel clearly shows that the Lord has compassionate interest and care for those who are down and out. Dr. C. I. Scofield wrote: "Luke is, in many ways, the Gospel of compassion, stressing, as it does, the Lord's sympathy for the brokenhearted, the sick, the mistreated, and the bereaved" (*The Scofield Study Bible*, NASV, p. 1401).

Fact #2 - Luke was a medical doctor. **Col. 4:14**

There were two main medical schools when Luke lived; one in Rome and one in Tarsus. He must have graduated from one of them because he is called the "beloved physician."

Now in the Roman Empire in the first century a private practitioner of medicine could make substantial sums of money. A. C. Bouquet, in his book on N.T. times, says that doctors in the first century could make "considerable fortunes."

What that practically teaches us is that Luke walked away from a very lucrative career because of his love for Jesus Christ. He devoted his life to serving God and especially helping the Apostle Paul.

In the N.T., we read horror stories like Demas who loved money more than God; but then you read about a guy like Luke who loved God more than money.

Fact #3 - Luke was an ideal and loyal friend. **Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1; II Tim. 4:11**

The gospel of Luke and the book of Acts amount to nearly 28% of the New Testament. Luke wrote both of these historical works for one man whose name was Theophilus. It is interesting that the thing Luke wanted more than anything was for Theophilus to know the truth about Jesus Christ.

Also we know that when everyone else deserted Paul, Paul said, "only Luke is with me" II Tim. 4:11.

What that tells us is that Luke was an amazing friend. He was a friend on whom you could depend. Sometimes in Christianity we forget that we need good friends.

A really good, reliable, trustworthy friend is hard to find. Luke was that kind of man. If Luke were your friend, you were blessed.

Fact #4 - Luke was a diligent worker in the things of God. **Philemon 24**

Paul said of Luke that he was his “fellow worker.” It is very rare to find a medical doctor who is a diligent worker for the work of God and the Word of God. But Luke was such a man.

Fact #5 - Luke was a highly intelligent scholar. **Luke 1:1-4**

Luke was an amazing scholar. He investigated everything carefully (1:2). He writes brilliant Greek. According to Alfred Plummer, Luke uses 312 peculiar Greek words. He was a very fact based researcher interested in objective facts, not emotional hyperbole (i.e. Luke 14:28-31). A couple of thoughts on this: 1) Great scholarship and intelligence may be greatly used by God; 2) Those who have scholarly minds are drawn to facts, not feelings.

Fact #6 - Luke was an unequalled historian.

Luke is the only one who tracks down information about John, the forerunner of Jesus Christ.

Luke is the only one who tracks down some data about the boyhood of Jesus Christ.

Luke is the only one who tracked down what was actually said by key people concerning the coming of Jesus Christ.

Luke is the only one who tracked down and recorded seven of the nine prayers prayed by the Lord that are not found in any other place.

The greatest historian concerning the life of Jesus Christ and the history of the Church is Luke. There are two very famous historians known to the Church. One was Eusebius (A.D. 300) and the other was Philip Schaff (A.D. 1800's). Schaff said this about Luke: “He is the proper father of Christian Church history and a model well worthy of imitation for his study of the sources, his conscientious accuracy, his modesty and his lofty aim to instruct and confirm the truth” (*Church History*, Vol. 1, p. 301).

Fact #7 - Luke was a humble servant.

Think of this—Luke writes 28% of the New Testament and does not even mention his own name. He was obviously not out to make a big name for himself. His life's philosophy was “He must increase, but I must decrease.” Luke could have earned big royalties for his research and gone on the lecture circuit demanding large fees but he is so humble, he doesn't even mention his own name.

Fact #8 - Luke was a deep theologian.

There is no question that the Apostle Paul had a profound impact on Luke. In fact, Luke is often called the gospel written to Gentiles.

As you will see, he had a very clear and deep understanding of the doctrines of God and he clearly shows that the worst of sinners may have their sins washed away by believing on Jesus Christ. Although this book is a book about the life of Jesus Christ, it is deep and rich in doctrine.

QUESTION #3 – How do we know Luke wrote Luke?

There are four ways we may prove this:

Way #1 - The testimony of all early writers.

As early as A.D. 100, there are preserved writings that testify Luke wrote Luke—Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, Eusebius, Jerome.

The only objection to this is that Luke was such a close friend of Paul and yet his writing is so different. The solution is simple: **Paul is writing the theology of the grace Gospel found in Jesus Christ and Luke is writing the history of Jesus Christ.**

Way #2 - The language of the book proves Luke wrote it.

Luke is written in a high level of Greek. He keeps a teacher like me reaching for a lexicon more often than I like to admit. He was a medical doctor and he had a tremendous vocabulary that was very skilled.

Way #3 - The similarities between Luke and Acts

Only Luke could have written Acts, which is proved by the many “we” sections and the same person who wrote Acts wrote Luke. Luke wrote Acts for Theophilus and said he had written a first account (Acts 1:1). That first account was the Gospel of Luke (Luke 1:3).

Way #4 - The medical interests of the writer indicate it was written by a doctor.

Luke was very interested in medical things:

- 1) He was interested in the intensity of the fever – Luke 4:38; Matt. 8:14/Mark 1:30
- 2) He was interested in the degree of leprosy – Luke 5:12; Matt. 8:2/Mark 1:40
- 3) He was interested in the specific hand that withered – Luke 6:6; Matt. 12:10/Mark 3:1
- 4) He was interested in the specific ear that was cut off – Luke 22:50; Matt. 26:51/Mark 14:47

These kinds of interests would be vintage Dr. Luke, proving he wrote the book.

QUESTION #4 – When did Luke write Luke?

Fact #1 - He finished Acts before Nero’s persecution and Paul’s execution (Acts 28:30).

This dates the book prior to A.D. 64.

Fact #2 - He wrote Luke before he wrote Acts. Acts is a sequel to Luke (Acts 1:1).

This makes our date prior to A.D. 62 or 63.

Fact #3 - He wrote Luke after having enough time to do extensive research (Luke 1:1-4).

Luke first hooked up with Paul in Acts 16:10 in Philippi in A.D. 51-52. When Paul left Philippi, Luke did not go with him (Acts 16:40-17:1). Luke meets up with Paul again in Philippi in Acts 20:5-6. This was about six years later and would bring the date to A.D. 58, on Paul's third missionary journey.

During this six year gap of time, Luke was probably doing his research, which means this book was written by A.D. 58-60.

God's lasting work is not overnight. It takes time and energy. Luke kept researching and writing and we have this great account because of it.

QUESTION #5 – What does the title “The Gospel According to Luke” mean?

Three facts to consider on this point:

Fact #1 - Luke does not give a study of the doctrine of the grace Gospel.

That was Paul's assignment - Rom. 1:1; 16:26; Phil. 1:16; II Tim. 1:10-11.

Fact #2 - The word “gospel” means good news.

The specific good news Luke presents is the good news concerning the birth, the life, the teachings, the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Fact #3 - The phrase “according to Luke” means the good news compiled and written down by Luke.

Specifically this is the good news of the life of Jesus Christ as compiled and written down by Luke.

This news concerns Christ's Person, His teachings and His work.

QUESTION #6 – Why did Luke write Luke?

At the time Luke wrote, only Matthew's gospel had been written and its primary purpose was to present Jesus Christ as the King of the Jews. John's gospel had not been written and neither had Mark's. There are three reasons:

Reason #1 - The specific reason.

Luke's specific reason for writing this entire gospel is to establish Theophilus in the faith (Luke 1:3-4). He went to all of this trouble to research and write this for one soul.

Reason #2 - The historical reason.

Luke wanted firsthand information and knowledge about everything pertaining to Jesus Christ. He wanted to put together a very detailed and accurate history of the life of Christ. It was a project he wanted to tackle. In fact, in Acts 1:1, Luke says the purpose of him writing Luke was to put together an accurate document "about all that Jesus began to do and teach."

Reason #3 - The practical reason.

He wanted people to practically know that God's program centered on Jesus Christ often goes against the world of religion.

Get ready for an amazing journey. Get ready to have your mind stretched and your faith developed. We are going on a trip through Luke.