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## “Introduction to Luke”

Luke 1:1-4

Luke was not one of the Twelve Disciples, he was not an apostle, nor was he a prophet; and yet, God gave him the responsibility and propensity to write the most comprehensive Biblical account of the life of Jesus Christ, and to also write the most complete narrative of the birth, growth, and dispersion of the Church of God (from the early 30's to early 60's A.D.), mostly following the life and travel of Peter and Paul.

The Gospel According to Luke and the Acts of the Apostles were written sometime between A.D. 60-62; they make up more than 25% of the New Testament. Luke is the undisputed author of both works, yet doesn't refer to himself by name, in either one.

Luke's name is only recorded three times in the New Testament (**Colossians 4:14**), “**Luke**, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and also Demas,” (**2 Timothy 4:11**), “Only **Luke** is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service,” (**Philemon 23-24**), “Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, *as do* Mark, Aristarchus, Demas *and Luke*, my fellow workers.”

**Read Luke 1:1-4...** Luke writes to Theophilus [Latin], Theophilos [Greek], *Theo* means *God*, *philus/philos* means *friend*; so this *Friend of God* is a Gentile, a non-Jew.

You will notice, as we read through Luke's Gospel Account, he avoids using Aramaic and Hebrew terms that are common to Jews, but he does explain Jewish customs, and some of the geography of Israel. This book would definitely find its way into the hands, hearts, and minds of Gentiles, those not familiar with Judaism.

In **Colossians 4:10-11**, Paul lists some fellow believers “who are from the circumcision,” i.e., Jewish Christians. Then in **Colossians 4:12-17**, he lists believers who are not part of the circumcision, i.e., they are Gentile believers, and in **verse 14**, as mentioned earlier, we find Luke listed with the non-Jews.

In **Luke 1:1-2**, Luke says this is “an account of the things accomplished among us just as they were handed down to us, by those who were eyewitnesses and ministers of the gospel from the very beginning.”

On the day of His resurrection Jesus appeared to His disciples (**John 20:19-21**), “it was evening on that day, the first *day* of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, ‘Peace *be* with you.’ And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace *be* with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’”

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Before Jesus left His Disciples to go back to the Father (**Luke 24:44-53**), “He said to them, ‘These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.’ And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. While He was blessing them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they, after worshiping Him, returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising God.”

After Jesus had been lifted up into heaven, the Disciples (**Acts 1:12-26**), “returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away. When they had entered the city, they went up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers” (cf. **Matthew 13:55**). At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said, ‘Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus (cf. **Psalms 41:9; John 13:18**). For he was counted among us and received his share in this ministry.’ (Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his intestines gushed out. And it became known to all who were living in Jerusalem; so that in their own language that field was called Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

For it is written in the book of Psalms, ‘Let his homestead be made desolate, And let no one dwell in it’; and, ‘Let another man take his office.’ Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us— beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.’ So they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias. And they prayed and said, ‘You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which one of these two You have chosen to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to

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go to his own place.’ And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.”

Luke was not an eyewitness, but he had talked with, investigated, evaluated, and recorded the testimony of many who were eyewitnesses, e.g., Peter, Paul, Matthew, John, Mark, and no doubt, many other not so well known witnesses, whose testimonies have been lost.

**1John 1:1-3**, “What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life— and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us— what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

**Luke 1:3** says Luke, “having investigated everything carefully from the beginning,” wrote it out, “in consecutive order.” With the Holy Spirit moving Luke along, using Luke’s natural attributes and training (as a doctor) to examine the evidence and accurately record his findings, God’s Spirit was making sure every word written by Luke was exactly what God wanted to be revealed to us.

**2Peter 1:20-21**, “But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”

**1Corinthians 2:12-13**, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*.”

**2Timothy 3:16**, “All Scripture is inspired by God [God-breathed] and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.”

Not only is Luke’s narrative accurate, but it is mostly written chronologically (from start to finish) concerning Jesus’ birth, circumcision, boyhood, baptism, public ministry, crucifixion, resurrection, appearances to His followers, and His ascent back into heaven.

There are some narratives in Luke’s Gospel, where he expounds on an event or teaching, but for the most part, this is an orderly account of the life of Christ written down and given to a man named Theophilus.

Luke would have assumed that his narrative would be read and shared, so that all who heard it (**Luke 1:4**), “may know the exact truth” about God’s sovereign plan to send His own Son to serve as full payment for our sins.

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Luke understood that redemption from sin’s curse was for everyone who repents and believes in Jesus Christ for salvation.

**Acts 10:34-48**, “Opening his mouth, Peter said: ‘I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him. The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)— you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed. You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.’ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they were hearing them speaking in tongues [*languages that were not their own*] and exalting God. Then Peter answered, ‘Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?’ And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.”

God shows no favoritism concerning salvation (**Galatians 3:26**), “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,” **28**, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

So, what do we know about Theophilus? As already mentioned, he was a Gentile like Luke. Because Luke addresses him as, “most excellent” Theophilus; he would seem to be a man of importance, e.g., this same title of respect (most excellent) is recorded by Luke (cf. **Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:25**) when speaking of Governors Felix and Festus.

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Evidently, Luke cared deeply for this man, who was perhaps a new convert or maybe an unbeliever who showed interest in the things of God; either way, Luke wanted to make sure that Theophilus [*Friend of God*], and anyone else reading this narrative, would have an accurate and orderly account of the life and ministry of Christ, so that they might believe, be saved, and become a true “friend” of God.

**John 15:15**, “No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.”

But isn't it just like our loving God to employ His Spirit to empower Luke, a traveling companion of Paul, to care so deeply for an unknown man named Theophilus, that Luke writes a lengthy historically chronological narrative and theological work, to this one man.

And yet, by God's providence, Luke's Gospel Account has now reached around the world with the divine message of salvation through Jesus Christ, God's Son.

**John 20:30-31**, “Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”

May we, each one of us, care enough, like Luke, to share this message with anyone and everyone who will listen: Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior and Lord, was sacrificially put to death as payment for our sins, He was then buried, but on the third day He came out of the grave alive, in order to sovereignly demonstrate that He alone has authority to forgive sins and grant eternal life, and that He is coming back to get all those who believe in Him, to be with Him forever, in heaven.

And all God's people said, Amen!

***Pastor Mike***

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