

The Half Hour That Changes the World

The Gospel of Luke

Book 42

Basic Questions behind the book:

If you were to offer a unique perspective on Jesus, what would it look like?

Summary of book:

Luke's Gospel, like the other three, is distinct. The book is anonymous – we don't know who wrote it for definite. However, scholars strongly believe that it was Doctor Luke, a companion of Saint Paul, as found in the record in the Acts of the Apostles. Acts, in fact, is believed to be the second volume of Luke's Gospel, so that we not only see God coming in Christ to us, but also see how Christ continues his ministry through the sending of the Holy Spirit and the ministry of the early Church. From the 2nd century AD it had the title 'according to Luke' attached to it. This Gospel has a clear recipient – Theophilus. He may have been a rich Christian patron who was supporting Luke's ministry. Or the name might be symbolic – Theo + Philus = God + lover = lover of God. It is believed to be the second Gospel written, probably between AD70 & 80. Luke's unique perspective includes a number of special features: (1) the unique birth and infancy narratives in chapters 1 & 2; (2) the introduction and statement of purpose for the Gospel in 1:1-4; (3) the cameo Gospel summary in 4:14-30; (4) the way he uses much of Mark's Gospel, word for word, in large chunks; (5) the unique way he portrays Jesus; (6) the concern of Jesus for the lost and poor, women, and non-Jews; (7) the way he uses parables (8) the place of the Holy Spirit. It is a well presented Gospel that has an enduring popularity down the centuries to today.

Vital Statistics:

Purpose: To present an accurate account of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ of Nazareth; to present Christ as the perfect human and Saviour of all.

Author: It is believed to be written by Doctor Luke, a Gentile physician, who sometimes writes in the first person in Acts, in the sense that he was there participating in the events. See the 'we' passages in the middle of the book (16:10-17; 20:5-21:18 & 27:1-28:16).

Recipients: Theophilus – a Christian patron of the early Church? All lovers of God?

Dating: In the last quarter of the first century around AD70-80.

Setting: Jerusalem, Judea and all of Israel at the time of Jesus.

Other Reflections:

Luke's Gospel implies that Jesus' message is for ordinary people puzzled by life's enigmas. Moreover, Christianity isn't a matter of private beliefs, but of public affirmation of faith as well. The Gospel is God's revelation to the world, and therefore it must be shared with the world. After all you'd share a box of chocolates with a friend, wouldn't you? How can we keep sharing the precious Gospel, through authentic lives, words and actions?

Key Verses:

"Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. 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, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught."

(Luke 1:1-4)