

THE BIG READ (3)

Luke

A. Introduction

1. The New Testament begins with four books which tell the story of Jesus' earthly life and together paint a beautiful portrait of who Jesus is.

The third Gospel is Luke, which is not only the longest of the four Gospels, it is the longest book in the New Testament.

Luke's Gospel, along with Matthew and Mark, are sometimes known as the synoptic gospels because they include many of the same stories, often in the same sequence, and with similar wording.

But Luke is unique among the synoptic gospels because it has a sequel – the book of Acts.

2. The unanimous view of the early church, was that Luke's Gospel was written by the Luke who accompanied the apostle Paul on his missionary journeys.

"The third book of the Gospel is that according to Luke. Luke, the well-known physician, after the ascension of Christ, when Paul had taken with him as one zealous for the law, composed it in his own name, according to belief." (Muratorian Canon ca. 180)

Who was Luke?

Luke was a doctor by profession who became one of the apostle Paul's travelling companions.

"Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings." (Colossians 4:14)

How did Luke write His Gospel?

Luke was not an eyewitness to the events he writes about in his Gospel. He was instead a careful researcher who talked with eyewitnesses, read other accounts, compared stories, and compiled and investigated the data before writing his own orderly account of what took place. As a travelling companion of Paul, he would have most likely known the 12 apostles.

"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 eye-witnesses 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." (Luke 1:1-3)

When did Luke write His Gospel?

As neither Paul and Peter's deaths are mentioned in the book of Acts (his sequel to Luke) it likely means that Luke's Gospel was written no later than AD62.

Who did Luke write His Gospel to?

Someone called Theophilus (name means 'lover of God'). Theophilus was a person of rank who appears to have contributed money to sponsor Luke's research and the cost of publishing Luke and Acts.

Why did Luke write His Gospel?

"...so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught." (Luke 1:4)

3. Luke presents the story of Jesus' life in five journeys that He made.

Chapters 1:1-4:13: Jesus' journey to earth.

Luke writes an orderly account of the events surrounding Jesus' birth and early years.

Chapters 4:14-9:50: Jesus' journey throughout Galilee.

Luke writes an orderly account of Jesus' actions as He travelled throughout Galilee, presenting Him as a preacher, healer and Prophet.

Chapters 9:51-19:44: Jesus' journey to Jerusalem.

Luke writes an orderly account of the teaching Jesus gave as He travelled to Jerusalem.

Chapters 19:45-23:56: Jesus' journey to the cross.

Luke writes an orderly account of the final week of Jesus' life which included His arrest, trial and crucifixion.

Chapters 24:1-53: Jesus' journey back to heaven.

Luke writes an orderly account of Jesus' resurrection, post-resurrection appearances, and ascension.

B. Things to look for

1. The historical markers Luke includes.

"In the time of Herod king of Judea there was..." (Luke 1:5)

"In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.)" (Luke 2:1-2)

"In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar – when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Tracoinitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene – during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas." (Luke 3:1-2)

Luke wants Theophilus, and all who would read his Gospel after him, to have confidence that everything he has written down is true and really did take place.

2. The superiority of Jesus compared to John.

There are lots of parallels in the opening chapters between John and Jesus.

John	Jesus
Prophecy of John (1:5-25)	Prophecy of Jesus (1:26-56)
John's birth and circumcision (1:57-66)	Jesus' birth and circumcision (2:1-21)
Song of celebration (1:67-79)	Song of celebration (2:22-39)
Summary of John's growth (1:80)	Summary of Jesus' growth (2:40-52)
John in the wilderness (3:1-17)	Jesus in the wilderness (3:21-4:13)
Summary of John's ministry (3:18-20)	Summary of Jesus' ministry (4:14-15)

"The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ. John answered them all, "I baptise you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire." (Luke 3:15-16)

Luke wants Theophilus, and all who would read his Gospel after him, to be clear right from the start of the book, who the one they should be focusing on is.

3. The language of salvation.

Salvation language is used more by Luke than any of the other Gospel writers – 'salvation', 'saviour', 'save' appear 17 times throughout the book.

"And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins." (Luke 1:76-77)

"But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:10-11)

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." (Luke 19:10)

Luke wants Theophilus, and all who would read his Gospel after him to know what is it that Jesus came to do, which is to be their Saviour.

4. The focus on those who were outsiders.

His concern for the poor and the sick.

"So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor." (Luke 7:22)

"Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame." (Luke 14:13)

His concern for the tax collectors and "sinners".

"Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." (Luke 15:1-2)

His concern for women.

"As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said." (Luke 10:38-39)

"On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity." Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God." (Luke 13:10-13)

His concern for Samaritans.

"And as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well." (Luke 17:14-19)

His concern for Gentiles.

"He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." (Luke 7:6-9)

Luke wants Theophilus, and all who would read his Gospel after him, to be convinced that this salvation is for all, including those who are marginalised by society.

C. Who is Jesus?

1. The Saviour who has come.

"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David." (Luke 1:68-69)

"But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:10-11)

"Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation." (Luke 2:28-30)

"Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." He said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God." (Luke 5:23-25)

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." (Luke 19:10)

"He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:46-49)

Luke after carefully investigating Jesus' life and ministry concludes that a Saviour has come.

2. The Saviour for the world.

"good news of great joy that will be for all the people." (Luke 2:10)

"For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." (Luke 2:30-32)

"And all mankind will see God's salvation." (Luke 3:6)

"the son of Adam." (Luke 3:38)

"repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations." (Luke 24:47)

Luke after carefully investigating Jesus' life and ministry concludes that He is a Saviour for the whole world.

D. How then shall we live?

1. Come to the feast.

"At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'" (Luke 14:17)

"The older brother became angry and refused to go in." (Luke 15:28)

2. Rejoice at the feast.

"But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." (Luke 15:32)

3. Invite to the feast – especially those who are on the margins.

"'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.' "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'" (Luke 14:22-24)