

A LOOK AT THE BOOK LUKE

Ralph Porter
© 2003

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Those who trusted Christ have been persecuted for years by zealous Jews. Now persecution was beginning to be felt by the Romans as well. **Those who were suffering for their faith needed to understand the basis for their faith to be able to stand firm in the midst of such affliction.**

Luke is interested in the major events which led to the foundation of the church. His second book is dedicated to explaining **HOW** that church was formed. His gospel leads into that story by telling us **WHY** the church was formed.

PURPOSE AND THEME

The stated purpose of the gospel is **to confirm** the things which Theophilus, as well as other later readers, had been taught. He wrote an orderly, historical account of the life of Christ **to document** what they had been told.

No reason is given in Acts to explain why God has begun the new program. Luke wrote the gospel to describe this initial phase of the transition.

As he describes the transition from the arrival of Messiah through His rejection, death and resurrection, **Luke demonstrates why the new program was necessary.** The distinctive characteristics of Luke's gospel correspond to his distinctive purpose.

DISTINCTIVE ELEMENTS

1. The evidence that Jesus was the "Son of man", that is, the Messiah.
2. Hearing is the primary distinctive of those who believe.
3. The religious leaders did not want to hear the truth. They had vested interests.
4. Those who were less than full citizens heard Him with enthusiasm: tax collectors, women, Samaritans, children, lepers, sick, demon-possessed, poor, and the masses.
5. Rejection of Messiah by the masses.
6. The cost of following Him tempts many to abandon Him.

Why did God form a new "called out" group? Israel's leaders did not want to hear the good news concerning Messiah. They were trying to protect their own privileges and interests, not learn truth. With a few exceptions, they rejected Jesus. Therefore, God set the leaders aside.

To form a new people, God had to move outside the nation, which they controlled.
He began with a few "outcasts" of society.

They would pay a high price for their faith.
Many would be tempted to abandon Him.

Nevertheless, God's people would grow into a mighty church no one would be able to destroy.

Luke encourages them in their affliction by reminding them of why and how God has brought them where they are.

