

A LOOK AT THE BOOK LUKE WHY GOD STARTED THE CHURCH

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AUTHOR AND DATE

Tradition clearly supports Lucan authorship of the book which bears his name.

Testimony is found in the Muratorian Fragment, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria and Origen.

No objective evidence has been presented to disprove this testimony.

While Luke itself presents little evidence, when combined with Acts the evidence is strengthened considerably.

Careful study of the "we" references in Acts, where the author includes himself as present with Paul (16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; and, 27:1-28:16), compared with the greetings sent in the letters to the churches indicates the strong probability that Luke wrote Luke and Acts.

The date assigned to Luke depends in part on its relationship to the other gospels.

It is commonly dated last among the synoptics.

As noted previously, the purpose of Matthew argues for its priority among the synoptics.

The order of Mark and Luke is not as clear.

Luke was written before Acts which is defined by the conclusion of the book in about A.D. 63.

Other accounts were circulating at the time which Luke consulted.

Therefore, the date is probably around A.D. 60.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The most significant events which affect Luke are the same as those mentioned in the introduction to Matthew's gospel.

However, in the light of Luke's distinctive purpose, it should be noted that by the time he writes the gospel, Paul has completed the initial three missionary journeys.

The message of the gospel and the church have spread throughout the Roman world.

Those who have 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.

The gospel of Luke leads into that story by telling us **WHY** the church was formed.

His introductory explanations relating the two books point to that fact.

Although Theophilus is otherwise unknown to church history, his common name immediately attracts attention.

The name means "friend of God."

It stands in contrast to those who love other things, such as money or self.

This name refers to one who loves God.

While the other descriptive phrases in the introduction indicate that the book was sent to a specific individual named Theophilus, the significance of the name and the content of the book demonstrate that it is directed to all those who truly love God.

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.

Luke wrote an orderly, historical account of the life of Christ **TO DOCUMENT** what they had been told.

Acts is frequently referred to as a transitional book.

It describes the transition from God's program with Israel to the formation of a new people of God, the church.

However, the transition does not begin in Acts.

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.
Pay attention to who wants to "hear"!
3. The religious leaders did not want to hear the truth.
They had vested interests.
4. Those who were less than full citizens of society heard Him with enthusiasm: tax collectors, women, Samaritans, children, lepers, the sick, the demon-possessed, the 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 the arrival of the Messiah.

They were trying to protect their own privileges and interests, not learn the truth.

With a few notable exceptions, the leaders rejected Jesus. God, therefore, set the leaders aside.

To form a new people, God had to move outside the nation, which those leaders controlled.

He began with a few of those "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 which no one would be able to destroy.

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

ORGANIZATION

The gospel divides into five major parts:

First Luke presents evidence from Jesus' birth and presentation which demonstrates that He is the Messiah (1:1-4:13).

Second, Jesus' ministry is described with special attention given to the distinct responses to it (4:14-9:50).

Third, Israel's formal rejection of their Messiah and its implications are presented as Jesus travels toward Jerusalem (9:51-19:27).

Fourth, Luke describes Jesus' suffering and death (19:28-23:56).

The climax is based on Jesus' triumph at the resurrection (24:1-53).

The commission Jesus gives His followers is possible because of His victory over His enemies and death.

ARGUMENT

PROLOGUE 1:1-4

Luke introduces his account with an explanation of his method and purpose.

He has taken information from all the sources available to him, investigated the facts discovered, and written an orderly account of the life of Christ.

He did this to document the facts which Theophilus, and other readers, had already been taught.

First, Luke presents evidence from Jesus' birth and presentation which demonstrates that He is the Messiah.

EVIDENCE OF THE SON OF MAN'S ARRIVAL 1:5-4:13

The account of the life of Christ begins with a description of His birth and presentation to Israel.

The events recorded demonstrate that Jesus was the Messiah.

EVIDENCE RELATED TO HIS BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD 1:5-2:52

Jesus' birth and childhood provide clear evidence of His supernatural origin

EVIDENCE RELATED TO HIS PRESENTATION TO ISRAEL 3:1-4:13

The forerunner of Messiah 3:1-20

The baptism of Messiah 3:21-22

The genealogy of Messiah 3:23-38

The temptation of Messiah 4:1-13

Satan Himself, using his most powerful temptations and best possible justifications, could not convince Jesus to deviate from God's will).

As an additional evidence, Satan's temptation of Christ in the wilderness demonstrates that He is Messiah.

Specific proof includes his personal involvement and dedication to cause Jesus to fail, his confession stating the fact, and Jesus' ability to resist these powerful temptations to glory and self-satisfaction.

Second, Jesus' ministry is described with special attention given to the distinct responses to it.

RESPONSES TO THE SON OF MAN'S MINISTRY 4:14-9:50

After the temptation by Satan, Jesus begins His initial teaching ministry in Galilee.

His ministry finds various responses.

Luke traces that ministry, describing the responses and those demonstrating each.

INITIAL PRESENTATION AND REJECTION 4:14-30

Jesus first presents Himself as the Messiah in the synagogue in Nazareth.

He has been teaching with the power of the Spirit in such a unique way that His reputation has spread through the entire region (4:14-15).

All His listeners were receiving His message as a word from God and were praising Him.

When He arrived in Nazareth, He read the scroll in the synagogue.

He used a portion concerning Messiah from Isaiah to announce His arrival (4:16-21).

When the people of Nazareth were unable to overcome their familiarity with Jesus' family to accept His message and ministry on its own merit, Jesus warned them concerning the danger of rejection (4:22-27).

The rejection of Jesus' Messianic message and ministry, and the reminder of the past acceptance by Gentiles of God's grace, prefigured the rejection by many in Israel and the grace God would extend to Gentiles in the future.

Jesus' listeners became angry and tried to kill Him when they heard this severe warning (4:28-30).

DEMONSTRATION OF AUTHORITY AND CONFRONTATION 4:31-6:11

As Jesus demonstrates His authority the opposition to His ministry increases.

Evidence of Jesus' authority 4:31-5:16

God gives Him power to perform many miraculous works which demonstrate His claim to be Messiah.

Authority over demons 4:31-37

Authority over sickness and demons 4:38-41

Authority to preach about the kingdom 4:42-44

Authority over nature 5:1-11

Authority over leprosy 5:12-16

Opposition to Jesus' authority 5:17-6:11

Authority over sin challenged 5:17-26

Authority over men challenged 5:27-32

Authority over tradition challenged 5:33-39

Authority over the Sabbath challenged 6:1-11

SEPARATION OF FOLLOWERS 6:12-49

As the nation demonstrates its rejection of Jesus, He begins to concentrate His efforts on His followers.

He selects twelve from among the many disciples to become specially commissioned co-workers, called apostles.

The call of the twelve 6:12-16

The instruction of the twelve 6:17-49

DEFINITION OF ALTERNATIVES 7:1-9:50

After introducing the two representative groups, those rejecting Jesus and those following Him, Luke defines the two alternatives and identifies the adherents of each.

Acceptance by outcasts of society 7:1-8:3

The outcasts of society, or those considered second class citizens, accept Jesus and receive the benefits of His ministry which the leaders rejected.

The beneficiaries of Christ's ministry included:

Gentiles (7:1-10),

Widow (7:11-17),

Many sick, lepers, poor and tax collectors (7:18-35)

Sinful woman of bad reputation (7:36-50)

Formerly demon-possessed women (8:1-3).

John's doubt 7:18-23

John, as God's appointed forerunner, was expected to accept as evidence that Jesus was Messiah His miraculous deliverance of the suffering and oppressed, whom the religious leaders rejected (7:18-35).

John's question interrupts the list of outsiders who received Jesus.

His question demonstrates what Israel's leaders should have investigated for themselves, but chose not to.

Jesus had certainly not fulfilled the popular expectation of what Messiah was supposed to be!

Was He really the one?

Or, should they keep looking?

John was expected to receive the evidence.

If he would be faithful to Jesus, in spite of contrary appearances, he would be satisfied in the end with the results of God's plan.

John's witness 7:24-29

Jesus takes advantage of John's inquiry to instruct the crowds.

The masses of the people recognize John as a prophet from God (20:6).

Jesus identifies Himself with John by calling their attention to his prophetic role in God's plan (7:24-28).

John was the greatest of the prophets.

He was the one chosen to prepare the way for Messiah.

The logical conclusion of what Jesus is saying is that if John is the forerunner and he is witnessing concerning Jesus, then Jesus must be the Messiah.

Those who recognize this and accept Him will become participants in His kingdom.

They will thus occupy an even better position than John himself.

He has prepared the way for it but has not entered the experiential realization of that kingdom.

They will enjoy that privilege.

Leaders' rejection 7:30-35

Once Jesus has explained the significance of the events they are witnessing, and traced the contemporary Messianic framework, He must deal with the issue of rejection (7:29-35).

In spite of clear and sufficient evidence of the Messianic significance of these events, only the common people are willing to receive Him.

The religious leaders have rejected God's plan.

Jesus' explanation of their rejection centers in John's ministry, rather than His own (7:29-30).

They are not really in conflict with John nor Jesus.

They have rejected God's plan for His people.

The identification of John and Jesus with each other makes clear the nature of the rejection by the religious leaders (7:31-35).

The leaders' real complaint is that neither John nor Jesus will play the game by their rules (7:31-34).

The issue is whether God's plan will prevail, or the human traditions which they have established.

The true evaluation, in the end, will not be based on their words but on the practical effects their religion is producing in their lives (7:35).

When their actions and motives are evaluated, the cause of their rejection will be evident.

Different responses predicted 8:4-21

Jesus warned the multitudes following Him by reminding them that the same sower may sow the same good seed, but the sowing will have different results according to the condition of the ground it falls on (8:4-8).

With this parable he teaches them the danger of rejection in its distinct forms and the importance of the condition of their heart.

Those who reject Him do not do so because of a deficiency in His message, but because their hearts are not willing to receive it.

Jesus then gives two related warnings based on the teaching about the importance of the condition of the heart.

He warns them to be sure of the condition of their hearts, since the true inner condition of the heart would show itself eventually (8:16-18).

Listening to God's voice is a clear indicator of the heart's condition.

Second, he warns them that His true family ties are not based on physical descent but on the reception and practice of the word of God (8:19-21)

Different responses demonstrated 8:22-56

Calming of the storm 8:22-25

Healing of demoniac 8:26-39

Resurrection and healing 8:40-56

Divine program confirmed 9:1-50

Although it was not God's plan for Jesus to reveal His glory yet, some of His disciples saw a revelation of His glory which confirmed that He was the promised One (9:28-36).

Jesus also revealed His power over Satanic forces when He healed the boy with the unclean Spirit (9:37-43).

His disciples were reminded through this lesson that their power was dependent on Him.

Third, Israel's formal rejection of their Messiah and its implications are presented as Jesus travels toward Jerusalem.

REJECTION OF THE SON OF MAN 9:51-19:27

Jesus has demonstrated that He is the Messiah.

He has come to fulfill the covenants as God had promised.

Now Luke begins to describe in great detail Israel's rejection.

At the same time, Jesus' determination to go to Jerusalem to die is noted (9:51).

DEMONSTRATION OF REJECTION 9:51-11:54

Rejection in Samaria 9:51-56

Cost of discipleship 9:57-62

Privilege of discipleship 10:1-20

Superiority of love 10:21-42

To intelligence 10:21-24

To ritual 10:25-37

To service 10:38-42

Persistence of prayer 11:1-13

Consequences of rejection 11:14-54

Having shown the contrast between those who have chosen to follow Him and those who have rejected Him, Christ directly addresses the issue of Israel's rejection.

Their accusation 11:14-16

This issue comes to a climactic confrontation when the leaders accuse Christ of casting out demons by Satan's power.

Jesus' defense 11:17-36

The divided kingdom 11:17-18

The exorcists 11:19-20

The strong man 11:21-23

Luke uses the incident to show that the supernatural evidence of God's power in Jesus' ministry demands a verdict (11:14-23).

Either God is at work and thereby has demonstrated the coming of His kingdom, or Satan is at work against himself and about to destroy his own cause.

The evil spirit 11:24-26

The generation which rejects Jesus is compared to a demon-possessed man whose efforts for self-renovation only serve to create a more miserable condition.

Christ might be referring to Israel's effort to be free from foreign political domination.

In this case, the unclean spirit would be the Gentiles who had controlled Israel for generations.

After the judgment in A.D. 70, Israel's condition was worse than it had been before.

Another possibility would be that Jesus is referring to Jewish preparation for Messiah under John.

Their rejection of Jesus left Israel's house empty, but cleaned up.

In the end her spiritual condition was worse than it had been before John's ministry.

The blessed ones 11:27-28

Jesus uses the blessing a woman directed to His mother to teach that those who receive His message and practice His teachings enjoy a better relationship to Him than those whose relationship is based on physical descent.

The sign of Jonah 11:29-32

Because of the seriousness of the rejection, the only sign that generation will be given is the death and resurrection of Jesus which will serve as a warning of impending destruction.

The appeal to Israel 11:33-36

Just as the pagan cities were judged, Jerusalem will also be judged.

They have had a greater revelation than those cities had.

Therefore they are more deserving of judgment.

Reception or rejection of the light revealed in Jesus' ministry will be the basis for judging their spiritual condition.

Jesus' accusation 11:37-54

Jesus accuses the religious leaders of Israel.

Although they were observing the prescribed external ritual and receiving praise for their acts, they did not love nor seek to submit to God.

The rejection of Jesus directs the reader's attention back to the two alternatives.

He may follow those who rejected Christ as their Messiah (11:14-54); or, he may follow those who accepted Him.

All, however, must make a choice.

Their future destiny depends on the choice they make (12:49-13:9).

INSTRUCTION IN VIEW OF REJECTION 12:1-19:27

Proper conduct for His followers 12:1-48

Distinguishing consequences of alternatives 12:49-13:9

Jesus returns to the issue of rejection.

The decision concerning rejection or acceptance of Jesus will produce different consequences for the two groups.

True nature of rejection 13:10-16:31

Luke combines a series of incidents from Jesus' ministry which demonstrate the true nature of the rejection he is describing.

He wants the reader to understand that the theological objections to Jesus were a smoke screen, intended to veil the true motive of Israel's leaders.

Personal instruction for disciples 17:1-19:27

Jesus concludes the discussion of the Pharisaic attitude with their final rejection of God's word.

He then leaves them behind and turns to the disciples.

His personal instructions to them are to prepare them for His rejection and departure.

Concerning forgiveness 17:1-10

Concerning thankfulness 17:11-19

Concerning future of the kingdom 17:20-37

Concerning prayer in persecution 18:1-8

In the midst of the persecution which will accompany the rejection of Jesus, God's children should trust Him to hear them when they cry out because of the injustice suffered.

He will repay appropriately those who mistreat them.

Concerning recognition of sin 18:9-14

Concerning entrance to the kingdom 18:15-30

Concerning rejection 18:31-19:27

The final series of instructions to the disciples deal with His rejection, death and resurrection.

He wants them to be aware of the things that are going to happen and how they relate to God's plan.

Fourth, Luke describes Jesus' suffering and death.

SUFFERING OF THE SON OF MAN 19:28-23:56

FORMAL PRESENTATION 19:28-48

Triumphal entry 19:28-40

Tearful prediction of judgment 19:41-44

Temple ministry 19:45-48

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION 20:1-21:38

Question concerning authority 20:1-8

Parable of the unjust tenants 20:9-19

Question concerning taxes 20:20-26

Question concerning resurrection 20:27-38

Question concerning David's son 20:39-44

When they decided that the questions were only confirming Jesus' wisdom, they stopped asking.

Then Jesus asked them a question.

How could the Messiah be both David's son and his Lord?

They could not explain it and thus did not answer.

Although Jesus shows that the leaders don't understand God's plan concerning Messiah, they never come to Him for an answer to clarify the issue.

They are not interested in the truth.

They want to stop Him and this question certainly won't help their cause!

Warning concerning the lawyers 20:45-47

Example of the poor widow 21:1-4

Judgment caused by opposition 21:5-36

The opposition to Jesus, which reaches its climax in His rejection and crucifixion, will result in judgment.

This judgment will be accomplished in two main stages, one immediate (A.D. 70), and one at the end of the age.

The kingdom will not be offered to Israel until after the second judgment.

Nocturnal refuge on the mount 21:37-38

AGREEMENT FOR BETRAYAL 22:1-6

PRIVATE PREPARATION 22:7-46

Celebration of Passover 22:7-38

Prayer on Mount of Olives 22:38-46

ARREST AND CONVICTION 22:47-23:25

Arrest 22:47-53

Denial 22:54-62

Trial 22:63-23:25

The trial of Jesus took place in various stages, all of which pointed to His innocence.

He was abused illegally by the guards without a cause (22:63-65).

Although the religious leadership really wasn't interested in discovering the truth about Jesus, they accused Him because of His claim to be the Son of God, that is, Messiah (23:63-71).

They never investigated the truth of the claim.

Jesus was tried before Pilate who found no basis to condemn Him (23:1-5).

Pilate's decision was confirmed by Herod also (23:6-12).

Their agreement formed the basis for a lasting friendship between the two who had previously been opposed to one another.

Although personally convinced of Jesus' innocence (23:13-17), Pilate gave in to the pressure of the Jews to crucify Him (23:18-25).

CRUCIFIXION 23:26-56

Assistance from Simon 23:26

Lament of the women 23:27-31

Mockery of the crowd 23:32-39

Faith of a criminal 23:40-43

Death of Jesus 23:44-46

Even as He died, Jesus' control of the event was evident.

Nature lamented His death as darkness covered the earth.

The temple veil was torn in two.

Jesus even authoritatively dismissed His own spirit.

Reactions of the witnesses 23:47-49

The centurion confessed he had never seen a death like this one before. Jesus was different.

The other witnesses also recognized the uniqueness of Jesus' death.

Burial of Jesus 23:50-56

The climax is based on Jesus' triumph at the resurrection (24:1-53).

The commission Jesus gives His followers is possible because of His victory over His enemies and death.

AUTHENTICATION OF THE SON OF MAN 24:1-53

The story doesn't end with Jesus' death however.

That's just the beginning of the story.

His claims were finally authenticated by His resurrection.

CONFIRMATION 24:1-12

Even those who followed Jesus were surprised by the resurrection and found it hard to believe, in spite of His repeated promise.

The event was confirmed by an angelic appearance to the women but the disciples dismissed their testimony as female nonsense.

Witness of the empty tomb 24:1-3

Witness of the angels 24:4-8

Witness to the unbelieving disciples 24:9-12

EXPLANATION 24:13-35

Besides the testimony of the women, His resurrection was confirmed by two of His followers whom he met on the road to Damascus.

Jesus appeared to them and explained the Scriptural teaching concerning Himself.

They were convinced by His appearance to them and to Peter.

Appearance to the two followers 24:13-18

Unbelief of the two followers 24:19-24

Explanation from the Scriptures 24:25-32

Confirmation from Simon 24:33-35

COMMISSION 24:33-49

Jesus appeared to disciples to demonstrate the fact of His resurrection and to explain God's program and their part in that program, in the light of His death and resurrection.

Confirmation of the resurrection 24:33-44

Commission for future ministry 24:45-49

The commission given here is repeated in Acts as the basis for their ministry in the foundation of the church.

ASCENSION 24:50-53

Following the challenge to preach the gospel to all nations, the disciples witness Jesus' ascension into heaven.

His ascension gave joy and certainty to the disciples and caused them to worship Him and to praise God.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE STUDY OF THIS GOSPEL?