

Introduction

... there has been born for you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. - Luke 2:11

Why should we master Luke?

1. What are the unique contributions of the Gospel of Luke?

His gospel is the longest of the four, and when the Acts is added he has written more of the New Testament than any other single writer. **Leon Morris**, *Luke* (Tyndale NT) p. 14

... the most beautiful book there is. **Ernest Renan**, *Les Evangiles* p. 283

Luke has cast his net wide, and produced a gospel the most voluminous and varied, the most vibrant and sympathetic, the most beautiful and sweetly reasonable of all that we possess. **William Manson** *Luke* (Moffatt NT) p. xxvii

We see the breadth of that great love of God in the universality of the salvation of which Luke writes. The very word 'salvation' is absent from Matthew and Mark and occurs but once in John. Luke, however, used *soteria* four times and *soterion* twice (another seven examples of the two words occur in Acts, a total of thirteen). He also uses the term 'Saviour' twice (and twice more in Acts), and he employs the verb 'to save' more often than does any other Evangelist. **Leon Morris** *Luke* (Tyndale) p. 36

The Third Gospel is also remarkable for the prominence which it gives to *Praise and Thanksgiving*. It begins and ends with worship in the temple (1:9, 24:53). Luke alone has preserved for us those hymns which centuries ago passed from his Gospel into the daily worship of the Church: the *Gloria in Excelsis*, or Song of the Angels (2:14); the *Magnificat*, or Song of the blessed Virgin Mary (1:46-55); the *Benedictus*, or Song of Zacharias (1:68-79); and the *Nunc Dimittis*, or Song of Symeon (2:29-32). **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* (ICC) p. xlvi

2. What are the particular contributions of Luke to our picture of Christ Himself?

This, then, is Luke, a man, somewhere, somehow, somehow, –



Ernest Renan

(1823-1892)

Which work did the famous French philosopher, historian, critic – and non-believer – pronounce "the most beautiful book ever written"? The Gospel of Luke.

and none knows when it happened, – was led to Christ, and he found in Jesus – I am taking the human name for a moment resolutely, – he found in Jesus the Personality Who fulfilled all his dreaming, and smashed the mould of Greek thinking by His greatness, for it was too small to hold Him. This Gospel draws the personality of our Lord from that standpoint, as fulfilling the idea of uttermost and absolute perfection. ... Two elements merged in him [Luke], which are very rarely found in one person. He was a man of scientific mind. He claims that. This was a scientific treatise, the result of scientific examination of the personality of Jesus. But he is also an artist. There is an old legend of the Church that a painting of the Virgin Mother was found in Jerusalem from the brush of Luke. The early Church writers all spoke of him as an artist. Somebody has said that he was a poet, too, and gives a proof, that he caught and preserved for us the great songs that burst upon the world with the coming of Jesus into it. Here, then, is a remarkable man, artistic in temperament and scientific in mentality. **G. Campbell Morgan** *Luke* pp.10,11

3. What has the last century revealed as to the historical credibility of Luke?

McGiffert in his *History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age* (1897) argues with great ability for the compilation theory of the Acts and vigorously assails the Lukan authorship. He dissects the book mercilessly and regards it as a second-hand work. But Harnack brushed aside McGiffert's criticisms. Ramsay says: "Doctor McGiffert has not convinced me; in other words, I think his clever argumentation is sophistical." In spite of McGiffert's attacks and Torrey's theory about the Aramaic document for the early part of Acts, the argument holds, as the result of this long conflict, that the same man is the author of both Gospel and Acts and he was a companion of Paul. **A.T. Robertson**, *Luke the Historian in Light of Research* (1920) p. 8

The When, Who, Where & Why of the Gospel of Luke

1. WHEN was Luke written?

The early date of about A.D. 63 still finds advocates; and no doubt there is something to be said for it. Quite the *simplest* explanation of the fact that S. Paul's death is not recorded in the Acts is that it had not taken place. If that explanation is correct the Third Gospel cannot be placed much later than A.D. 63. Again, the writer of the Acts can hardly have been familiar with the Epistles to the

Corinthians and the Galatians; otherwise he would have inserted some things and explained others How long might Luke have been without seeing these Epistles? Easily till A.D. 63; but less easily till A.D. 80. Once more, when Luke records the prophecy of Agabus respecting the famine, he mentions that it was fulfilled (Acts xi. 28). When he records the prophecy of Christ respecting the destruction of Jerusalem (21:5-36), he does not mention that it was

fulfilled. The simplest explanation is that the destruction had not yet taken place. And, if it be said that the prediction of it has been retouched in Luke's record in order to make it more distinctly in accordance with facts, we must notice that the words, "Let them that are in Judea flee to the mountains," are in all three reports. The actual flight seems to have been, not to the mountains, but to Pella in north Perea; and yet "to the mountains" is still retained by Luke (21:21). **A. Plummer** *Luke* (ICC) p.xxxii

2.. WHO wrote Luke?

The author of the Third Gospel and of the Acts is the most versatile of all the N.T. writers. He can be as Hebraistic as the LXX, and as free from Hebraisms as Plutarch. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* (ICC) p.xlii

[Form critics] ascribe to the community the power to create the memorable sayings of the Gospels, quite ignoring the fact that in history it is great individuals, not committees, that produce striking language. **Leon Morris**, *Luke*, p. 30

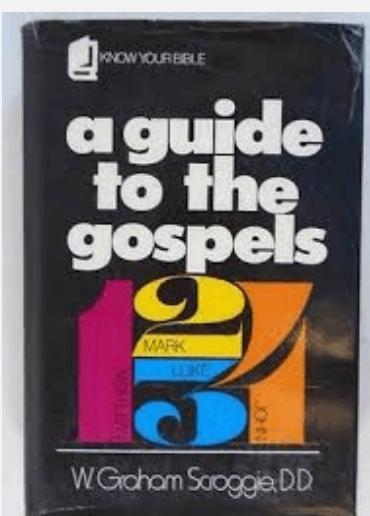
Of the companions of S. Paul whose names are known to us no one is so probable as S. Luke; and the voice of the first eight centuries pronounces strongly for him and for no one else as the author of these two writings. If antiquity were silent on the subject, no more reasonable conjecture could be made than "Luke the beloved physician." He fulfils the conditions. Luke was the Apostle's companion during both the Roman imprisonments (Col. 4:14; Philem. 24; 2 Tim. 4:11), and may well have been his companion at other times. That he is not mentioned in the earlier groups of Epistles is no objection; for none of them coincide with the "we" sections in the Acts. Moreover, the argument from medical language, although sometimes exaggerated, is solid and helpful. Both in the Acts and in the third Gospel there are expressions which are distinctly medical; and there is also a good deal of language which is perhaps more common in medical writers than elsewhere. This feature does not amount to proof that the author was a physician; still less can it prove that, if the author

was a physician, he must have been Luke. The Apostle might have had another medical companion besides the beloved physician. But, seeing that there is abundance of evidence that Luke was the writer of these two documents, the medical colour which is discernible here and there in the language of each of them is a valuable confirmation of the evidence which assigns the authorship of both to Luke. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* (ICC) p.xiii

Notwithstanding that so little is said of him, we are made aware of a man who was at once a historian, a medical doctor, a psychologist, an artist, a poet, a mystic, a traveller, a missionary, a devoted friend, and a great Christian. **W. Graham Scroggie**, *A Guide to the Gospels* p. 336

3. WHERE did he get his information?

It is likely, then, that Luke had six or seven sources: (1) the 'many' narratives referred to in his Preface; (2) Mark's gospel; (3) Q, or the *Logia* of Matthew; (4) Mary, the mother of Jesus, and her immediate circle; (5) information derived from the Court of Herod; (6) what he learned from many important people he must have met in Palestine by virtue of his association with Paul, and probably (7) Philip of Caesarea and his daughters. **W. Graham Scroggie**, *A Guide to the Gospels* p. 343



Luke ... "a historian, a medical doctor, a psychologist, an artist, a poet, a mystic, a traveller, a missionary, a devoted friend, and a great Christian."

and of the Roman Empire (2:1, 3:1). The sixfold date (3:1) is specially remarkable ... **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* (ICC) p.xlvii

Could you answer these questions?

1. What does Luke consider the basis of his gospel's credibility?

He claims to be believed because of the accuracy of his researches among the best authorities. Had he himself been a eye-witness of any portion, would he not have let us know this? Why did he not use the first person, as in the "we" sections in the Acts? He belongs to the second generation of Christians, not to the first. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* (ICC) p.xix

2. What are the peculiar sympathies of Luke?

In working out that great redemptive purpose Luke thought of God as concerned with people. He did not think of the divine purpose as appearing only in great movements of nations and peoples: it operated in the lives of humble men and women, for even the little people matter to God. So he has much to say about individuals, often people not mentioned elsewhere. He tells us of Zechariah and Elizabeth, of Mary and Martha, of Zacchaeus, of Cleopas and his companion. He tells of the woman who anointed Jesus' feet in the home of Simon the Pharisee, and of others. An interesting point

emerges from the study of the parables he records. Whereas in Matthew the parables centre on the kingdom in Luke they tend to stress persons. **Leon Morris** *Luke* (Tyndale) p. 40

Dante calls S. Luke "the writer of the story of the gentleness of Christ," ... It is a detail, but an important one, in the universality of the Third Gospel, that it is in an especial sense the Gospel for women. Jew and Gentile alike looked down on women. But all through this Gospel they are allowed a prominent place, and many types of womanhood are placed before us: Elizabeth, the Virgin Mary, the prophetess Anna, the widow of Nain, the nameless sinner in the house of Simon, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, the woman with the issue, Martha and Mary, the widow with the two mites, the "daughters of Jerusalem," and the women at the tomb. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* (ICC) p.xlii

All told he refers to Jerusalem 31 times as against 13 times in Matthew, 10 times in Mark and 12 times in John. The universalism of Luke is real, but we should not let it hide from us a very real 'Jewishness'. **Leon Morris** *Luke* (Tyndale) p. 37

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3. Can you cite 5 episodes unique to Luke which emphasize his sympathies – and make his gospel the ‘gospel for the Greek’?

The Jew was characterized by deep religious feeling, the Roman by strength of will for action, and the Greek by great intellectual power. To the Greek people belong Homer, and Plato, and Aristotle, and Demosthenes. They were the representatives of universal humanity, and the great ideal towards which they worked was the perfect man. But by making their gods in their own image, they deified vice as well as virtue, and so their religion was unspiritual and debasing, and their hearts were restless and despairing (Acts 17:16,21,23). The presentation of Christ in Luke's gospel has in view these characteristics and needs. The human perfection which they sought is here manifested, their intellectual hunger could here be satisfied, and their religious aspirations may now be purified and realized. The presentation of Christ in Matthew, and in Mark, would not answer to the Greek need, but in Luke the answer is given in the Perfect Man. **W. Graham Scroggie, A Guide to the Gospels** p. 344