

INTRODUCTION TO 42ND BIBLEBOOK

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE (A.D. 62-63)

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A. THE WRITER OF THE GOSPEL OF LUKE.

1. The introductions of Luke and Acts.

From the introductions to the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts it is clear that one and the same person wrote the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. Luke and Acts were written as letters to Theophilus, but meant to be public. While Mark wrote his Gospel based mainly on the preaching and teaching of the apostle Peter, Luke wrote his Gospel based on the materials of many sources. Luke had been a companion of the apostle Paul for a long time and had more than a casual acquaintance with the rest of the apostles.

2. The name Luke in the New Testament.

The third Gospel is called 'Luke', the name of the fellow-worker of Paul. The name Luke occurs only three times in the New Testament. During his first imprisonment in Rome, in Colossians 4:14 Paul calls him "our dear *friend* Luke, the *doctor*". Because in this passage he is distinguished from the Jews (those of the circumcision), Luke appears to be an educated Greek. In Philemon 23-24 Paul writes that "his *fellow workers* Mark ... and Luke" send greetings. During his second imprisonment in Rome, in 2 Timothy 4:11 Paul says, "Only Luke is with me." From these passages it is clear that Luke was Paul's loyal travel companion and fellow worker.

3. The writer of the Gospel and the book of Acts was Paul's travel companion.

In the book of Acts, the writer never mentions himself by name, but several times includes himself as a part of the travel group. Then he says 'we' did this or that.

- The first so-called 'we' section is Acts 16:10-17. Luke joins Paul's second missionary journey in A.D. 50 at Troas, ministers with them in Philippi and then remains at Philippi for more than six years.
- The second 'we' section is Acts 20:6-15. Luke again joins the end of Paul's third missionary journey in A.D. 57 at Philippi. He is with Paul when Paul preaches at the Sunday service at Troas and probably also when he meets with the elders of Ephesus at Miletus.
- The third 'we' section is Acts 21:1-16. Luke is with Paul when he meets with Philip the evangelist and Agabus the prophet at Caesarea.
- The fourth 'we' section is Acts 21:17-18 and is so closely connected with what follows that we may well conclude that Luke was a witness of the events that happened in Jerusalem. Luke is with Paul when he meets with James and all the elders at Jerusalem and when Paul is arrested and makes a speech to the Jerusalem crowd. During A.D. 57-59 when Paul was imprisoned at Caesarea, Luke probably did research work for his Gospel. From 1 Corinthians 15:6 we know that many eye-witnesses of the works and words of Jesus were still alive at that time.
- The final 'we' section is Acts 27:1-28:16. Luke is with Paul when he travels to Rome as a prisoner. In Colossians 4:14 Paul himself tells us that Luke is with him during his first imprisonment in Rome. This was in A.D. 60-61. In Rome, the dear friend and doctor must have visited him very regularly and must have helped him in many ways. Finally, in 2 Timothy 4:14 Paul himself tells us that only Luke is with him during his second imprisonment in Rome. This was in A.D. 64/65.

4. Luke never mentions himself in his writings.

The other evangelists did the same. Although Matthew mentions his own name twice in his Gospel, he does not claim that he wrote it. Matthew refers to himself as 'the tax collector'¹. Mark refers to himself as 'a young man'². And John refers to himself as 'the disciple whom Jesus loved'³. Therefore, this very fact may well point to Luke as the writer, for also in none of the other three Gospels does the writer ever identify himself.

¹ Matthew 10:3

² Mark 14:51

³ John 21:20

5. The writer of the Gospel was a medical doctor.

When certain passages in Luke are compared to their parallel passages in Mark and Matthew, then we discover that they coincide with the description of Luke as *a medical doctor*.

- In Luke 4:38, Peter's mother-in-law suffers from a *high* fever.
- In Luke 5:12 a man came to Jesus who was *covered* with leprosy.
- In Luke 8:43 there was a woman whom *doctors could not heal!*
- In Luke 6:6 Luke noticed that it was the man's *right* hand that was withered.
- In Luke 22:50 that it was the man's *right* ear that was cut off.

6. The writer of the Gospel reflects Paul's theology.

- Just like the apostle Paul, Luke stresses that God gives his *salvation by sovereign grace* to people regardless of their race, nationality, sex, age or social position. For example, God prepared his salvation for both Gentiles and Jews (2:30-32). Jesus forgives the sins of a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town (7:36-50). God does not look at the position of the Jewish priest or Levite, but at the heart of mercy of the Samaritan (10:30-37). People will come from east and west and north and south to enter the kingdom of God (13:29). Jesus Christ came to seek and to save what was lost (19:10). Jesus says that repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached to all nations (24:49).
- Just like Paul, Luke stresses *the necessity of faith*. For example, "Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!" (1:45) "Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (7:50).
- Just like Paul, Luke speaks about *justification in a legal sense*. For example, Jesus says "I tell you that this man ... went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled ..." Although this tax-collector was not sinless, God regarded and treated him as completely righteous (18:14)!
- Just like Paul, Luke emphasises *prayer*. Luke describes the habit of Jesus: "Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed" (5:16). Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray (5:16).
- Just like Paul, Luke emphasises that *Christ is Lord*. For example, "Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord" (2:11). "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" (6:5). "Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say" (6:46)?
- Just like Paul, Luke gives much attention to the teaching about *the Holy Spirit*. For example, the angel said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God" (1:35). Jesus says, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, the release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (4:18-19).
- Just like Paul, Luke stresses *joy amidst the circumstances in the world*. For example, Jesus says, "Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (10:20). Luke describes the joy of the people, "When Jesus said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing (13:17)."
- Just like Paul, Luke gives much attention to *the mercy, love and kindness of Christ to the less privileged, the weak and the rejected*. For example, both books of Luke have stories, parables and teachings in which his love in action is revealed to the poor and the social outcasts, to children and women, to tax-collectors and sinners, to the sick and the handicapped, and to Samaritans and Gentiles.
- There is also a striking resemblance between Paul and Luke's account of *the institution of the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11:23-25 and Luke 22:19-20*. Luke probably obtained this report from Paul. Nevertheless, Luke gathered his materials from many sources, not only from Paul. He generally writes in a more calm manner than Paul.

7. The historians ascribe this Gospel to Luke.

- The church father Eusebius in A.D. 300. He wrote, "Luke is by race an Antiochian and by profession a physician. He had been a companion of Paul for a long time and had more than a casual acquaintance with the rest of the apostles. In two books, inspired by God, namely the Gospel and the Acts, he left us examples of the art of healing the soul which he had learned from them."
- The Anti-Marcionite Prologue in about A.D. 180. "Luke, an Antiochian of Syria, a physician by profession, was a disciple of the apostles. At a later date he accompanied Paul, until Paul's martyrdom. He served the Lord blamelessly. Having neither wife nor children, at the age of eighty-four he fell asleep in Boeotia, full of the Holy Spirit. While there were already Gospels in existence - that according to Matthew written in Judea and that according to Mark in Italy - Luke, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, composed his entire Gospel in the region of Achaia. In his prologue he makes very clear the fact that other Gospels had been written before his, and that it was necessary to present to believers converted from the Gentile world an accurate account of the plan of salvation, so that these people would not be led astray by Jewish fables, nor be deceived by heretical and futile fancies, and thus wander away from the truth. ... And afterwards, this same Luke wrote the Acts of the Apostles."
- The title of the Gospel. Luke wrote to Theophilus, who was probably one of his highly respected friends, with the purpose of enlightening all earnest seekers and to strengthen the faith of new believers, especially from the Greek-speaking Roman world. His ultimate purpose was to teach the gospel to all nations. When the Gospels began to be copied, circulated and quoted in the writings of the church fathers, these people were not in the habit of mentioning the names of the writers of the Gospels, probably because they were well-known by everybody.

About A.D. 125 the Four Gospels were assembled into one collection for use in the churches and they were given titles. The title “According to Luke” affirms that Christians knew that it was written by Luke.

B. THE SOURCES FOR WRITING THE GOSPEL OF LUKE.

1. Luke made use of the Gospel of Mark.

Luke contains about one third of the material of the Gospel of Mark. In almost every case in which the Gospel of Luke is parallel to the Gospel of Mark, it is also parallel to the Gospel of Matthew. The exceptions are Luke 4:31-37; 4:42-44; 9:49-50 and 21:1-4. The papyrus rolls, which the evangelists used to write their Gospels on, had a limited size. It is quite possible that Luke intentionally left out certain sections from the Gospel of Mark in order to have more space left on his papyrus roll to write down the materials resulting from his own research. However it is especially notable how much new materials Luke included in his Gospel in relation to Mark. For example, Luke has the history of the birth of Jesus, and 24 parables that are not found in Mark!

2. Luke probably made use of the notes of Matthew.

The church father Papias, who lived from A.D. 60-155 said, “Matthew arranged the ‘logia’ in the Hebrew language, and each translated them as he was able. This means that during the ministry of Jesus from A.D. 26-30, Matthew made notes about things that were said and done by the Lord Jesus Christ in the Aramaic language, which both Jesus and his disciples spoke. Later, the other evangelists (Gospel writers) translated and used these notes of Matthew to write their own Gospels. Especially the material found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke but absent from the Gospel of Mark may have been derived in part from these notes of Matthew.

3. Luke made most use of his own research.

In Luke 1:1-4 Luke states that his Gospel is based on witnesses who saw and heard Jesus himself as well as on the testimony of those who served Jesus during his work on earth, that is, on the testimony of the apostles of Jesus. These people predominantly spoke Aramaic. Moreover, Luke states that he carefully investigated everything from the beginning. While Luke was in the vicinity of Jerusalem in A.D. 57-59, he could have spoken to Mary, the mother of Jesus, or to others of her close relatives and friends to whom she had entrusted the facts with regard to Christ’s conception and birth. Joanna, the wife of Chuza, the manager of the household of Herod (8:2-3), could have given Luke information with regard to Herod (24:10). Luke could also have gathered information from Paul, who probably was a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin⁴ and who was definitely in touch with the early disciples of Jesus, because he persecuted them⁵. Philip, the evangelist, could have informed him with regard to the events in Samaria⁶, James could have informed him about the family life of Jesus and the events around Pentecost, etc.⁷. Mark could have given him a copy of his Gospel to use⁸. Luke must have made use of written sources, namely of the Hebrew and Greek Old Testament and possibly of other Aramaic documents that spoke about Jesus. This explains the Semitic style of some parts of his Gospel, for example Luke chapters 1-2.

4. Luke was above all inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit.

Each of the four evangelists (Gospel writers) proclaimed and wrote the same message to the world, even though they did this, each with a somewhat different purpose and in a different style, and each endowed with a different personality. Each made use of somewhat different sources: Matthew made notes of Jesus’ works and words during his life on earth. Mark made use of the preaching and teaching of the apostle Peter. Luke made use of many witnesses and already existing documents. But whatever sources they used, each Gospel is from beginning to end inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit. 2 Timothy 3:16 says, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correction and training in righteousness.” That is also why the Gospels have never lost their power to attract, influence and change people from every culture in the world and for so many centuries long!

C. THE DATE OF WRITING THE GOSPEL OF LUKE.

In Luke 19:41-44 and 21:20 Jesus predicts the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. This actually happened in A.D. 70 by the Roman general Titus. Thus Luke and Acts must have been written before A.D. 70. Because the book of Acts ends with Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome in A.D. 61, it was probably written soon after that date. In the summer of A.D. 64, a great fire destroyed three quarters of Rome. The fire was probably caused by the cruel Caesar of Rome called Nero. In order to divert attention from himself, he blamed the Christians. A great persecution against the Christians began in which they were burned publicly on stakes or thrown before wild beasts in the arena.

But because the book of Acts still speaks positively of the Roman government everywhere, the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts must have been written before A.D. 64. The book of Acts was probably written in A.D. 63 and the Gospel of Luke was written not long before that during A.D. 62-63.

⁴ Acts 26:10

⁵ Acts 9:1

⁶ Act 21:8

⁷ Acts 21:18

⁸ Philemon 24

D. THE PLACE OF WRITING THE GOSPEL OF LUKE.

The Anti-Marcionite Prologue states that Luke wrote his books in the region of Achaia, probably because it wanted to stress that Luke was a Greek, completely at home in the Greek world and writing his Gospel for the entire Greek speaking world of his day. Although Luke probably made a lot of research for his Gospel and Acts and wrote his preliminary notes in Jerusalem, Caesarea, Asia Minor and Achaia, it is most probable that he wrote his final books in Rome. We therefore conclude that Luke wrote his Gospel during A.D. 62-63 in Rome.

E. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LUKE.

1. The Gospel of Luke is related to contemporary history.

Luke covers a longer span of history than Matthew and Mark.

In its beginning, the Gospel of Luke traces the genealogy of Jesus back all the way to Adam, the father of all humans on earth. In its end, it records the ascension of Jesus to heaven and even makes an allusion to the coming outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Luke relates his narrative to contemporary historical events.

- The priest Zechariah received a promise of the birth of his son in the days of king Herod the Great of Judea (37-4 B.C)(1:5).
- The census (2:1-2) took place when Quirinius was governor of Syria between 12 B.C. and 16 A.D., probably between 8-5 B.C.
- Jesus was born in December 5 B.C. during the reign of Caesar Augustus (27 B.C. to 14 A.D)(2:1)⁹. He ascended into heaven in May 30 A.D.
- John the Baptist began his ministry in the 15th year of the sole reign of Tiberius Caesar (3:1). Tiberias was actually coregent years before that¹⁰. Thus John began his ministry about a half year before that of Jesus (also 26 A.D.)
- Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea from 26 to 36 A.D. (3:1)
- Herod Antipas was tetrarch of Galilee from 4 B.C. to 39 A.D. (3:1)
- Philip was tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonicus from 4 B.C. to 34 A.D. (3:1)
- Annas was high priest from 6 to 15 A.D. (3:1)
- Caiaphas was high priest from 18 to 36 A.D. (3:1)
- Jesus was about 30 years old when he began his ministry (26 A.D.)(3:23)

Luke also made other kinds of chronological references, like “When Jesus was twelve years old” he visited the temple in Jerusalem (2:42). He also states that the transfiguration of Jesus took place about eight days after Peter’s confession of Christ (9:28) and that darkness came over the whole world between the sixth and ninth hour on the day Jesus was crucified (23:44).

2. The Gospel of Luke has some real differences with the Gospel of Matthew.

The differences between the Gospel of Luke and the Gospel of Matthew can be explained. For example:

The genealogy of Luke 3 differs from the genealogy of Matthew 1.

Matthew’s genealogy is much shorter and he skips more generations. Matthew has only 16 names between David and Shealtiel, while Luke has 22. Matthew has only 13 names between Shealtiel and Jesus, while Luke has 22. This means that *the words “son of” can also mean “descendant of”*.

Matthew says Jesus is “the son of David, the son of Abraham”, because he writes to show the significance of the Messiah for the Jews. Luke says Jesus is “the son of Adam, the son of God”, because he writes to show the significance of the Messiah for the entire human race. And this human race is derived from God himself. It has no animal origin!

Matthew shows the *legal descent* of Jesus through Joseph, his relationship to Abraham, the father of the Jews, and his right to inherit the throne of king David. Luke, however, says, “Now Jesus himself, supposedly the son of Joseph, was about thirty years old¹¹ when he began his ministry, being a son of Heli, etc.”. *Heli is believed to be the father of Mary and thus the son-in-law of Joseph*. Luke shows the *strict personal descent* of Jesus through Mary and his relationship to Adam, the father of the human race.

According to the genealogies and Luke 1:32, both Joseph and Mary were direct descendants of king David. *Matthew shows that Joseph is a descendant of David through Solomon, while Luke shows that Mary is a descendant of David through Nathan*.

The rejection at Nazareth.

⁹ Julius Caesar (murdered 44 B.C.) named his grandnephew of Gaius Octavius his son and heir. Gaius changed his name into Gaius Julius Caesar and reigned as the first Roman emperor, emperor Augustus, from 27 B.C. to 14 A.D.

¹⁰ Tiberias succeeded his stepfather Augustus and *officially reigned* from AD 14-37, but he *actually reigned* as co-regent with Augustus years before that! “The 15th year of the reign of Tiberias” (Luke 3:1) is how Tiberias viewed his official reign. Tertullian (against Marcion I xv) says: “the Lord has been revealed (baptised by John and began his ministry) since the 12th year of Tiberias Caesar”, thus in A.D. 26.

¹¹ The dates for Jesus are probably December 5 B.C. (his birth), December 26 A.D. (his baptism), April 30 A.D. (his crucifixion), May/June 30 A.D. (his ascension).

While in Matthew 13 and Mark 6, the rejection of Jesus at Nazareth took place towards the end of his Galilean Ministry, Luke places this event at the very beginning. From the contents it is clear that they all describe the same event. On a Sabbath Jesus enters his hometown and teaches in the synagogue. The result is first astonishment, then adverse criticism and finally rejection. In all three Gospels he says that only in his home town, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honour¹². Even the historical background in Luke 4:23 shows that his rejection at Nazareth did not take place at the beginning of his Galilean ministry, but much later. The reason why Luke puts this at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry was *to summarise the general trend with respect to people's attitude towards Jesus*: the crowds first show enthusiastic interest and amazement in Jesus' work and words, but later reject him everywhere.

The place of the Sermon on the Mount.

While the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew took place on a mountain¹³, in the Gospel of Luke Jesus stood with his disciples on a level place¹⁴. This seeming contradiction disappears when we assume that Jesus delivered this sermon on a mountain plain.

The time when Jesus taught the Lord's prayer.

While in Matthew Jesus taught the Lord's prayer as a part of the Sermon on the Mount¹⁵, Luke taught it in answer to a request of one of his disciples. This is not a contradiction, because Jesus may have taught this prayer several times in different situations to more than just his own disciples. Moreover, the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew may include sayings that belong to another period.

F. THE PURPOSE OF THE GOSPEL OF LUKE.

1. Luke's first purpose was the spiritual well-being of just one person.

Luke made a very thorough research and wrote a very long book to his friend, Theophilus. We do not know who he was, but because he is addressed as "most excellent" (1:3), he was probably a person worthy of honour and a representative of the intellectual class at Rome.

2. Luke's second purpose was to teach the gospel especially to the people from the Greek-speaking Roman world.

His Gospel gives very accurate information to people who were still seeking the truth and were considering becoming followers of Jesus Christ. But his Gospel also strengthens the faith and lives of new Christian converts, especially converts from the Greek speaking heathen in the Roman Empire.

3. Luke's third purpose was to proclaim the gospel to all the nations in the world.

He writes to Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles. His Gospel is grounded in God, who created the first man, Adam, the human ancestor of Jesus. Luke makes his appeal to all people in the world. His Gospel is founded on the Old Testament prophecies, which speak of God's purpose with the Gentiles. For example, in Luke 2:31-32 is written that Jesus Christ is the salvation that God prepared for all his people in the world. Jesus Christ is *the light* to the Gentiles and *the glory* to the Jews. This means that he reveals the true knowledge about God and salvation to the Gentiles and that he is the visible manifestation of God's presence to the Jews.

4. Luke's fourth purpose was to bring sinners and outcasts to Jesus.

Luke writes his Gospel as good news for the outcasts on earth. In chapter 7, Luke tells of the woman who had lived a sinful life in the city. In chapter 10, he tells of the good Samaritan, a race despised by the Jews. In chapter 15, he tells of the lost son, who had lived in an irresponsible way and had squandered his whole inheritance to bad friends. In chapter 18, he tells of the humble tax collector who in the end was more righteous than the proud religious leader. In chapter 19, he tells of Zacchaeus, who had become a rich man by cheating. And in chapter 23, he tells of the thief on the cross, who was a convicted criminal. Luke's purpose is to tell all the people in the world that *nobody is a hopeless case*. There is hope for salvation for everyone who repents and believes in Jesus Christ!

G. THE CONTENTS OF THE GOSPEL OF LUKE.

1. The Gospel of Luke compared to the Gospel of Mark and Matthew.

Luke like Matthew made use of the Gospel of Mark. In the original language, the Gospel of Mark has 661 verses. While Matthew uses about 500 of these, Luke uses only 350 of these. The Gospel of Luke has 1149 verses. Thus two thirds of the Gospel of Luke contains no material from the Gospel of Mark.

Generally we can say that the Gospel of Luke alternates non-Mark blocks with Mark blocks of material. The non Mark blocks in the Gospel of Luke are:

- Luke chapters 1-3
- Around chapter 7 (6:17 to 8:3)

¹² Mark 6:4

¹³ Matthew 5:1; 8:1

¹⁴ Luke 6:17

¹⁵ Matthew 6:9-13

- Around chapters 10 to 17 (9:51 to 18:14)
- the first half of chapter 19 (19:1-28)
- most of chapter 24.

Especially the central section of the Gospel of Luke contains only one seventh of the material from Mark and about one half of the material from Matthew.

2. The most important material that is unique in the Gospel of Luke.

- The birth of Jesus. Most of Luke chapters 1 to 3 are unique. They describe the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus.
- The ministry of Jesus in Perea. Especially the middle section of the Gospel of Luke, chapters 10-19 contain much material that is unique to Luke.
- The parables. Except chapter 9, every chapter from Luke 6 to 20 contains a parable. The Gospel of Luke has 27 parables, of which 3 are also found in Matthew and Mark, 6 are also found in Matthew, but 18 are unique in Luke. Of these unique parables 17 are found in Luke chapters 10 to 19.
- After the resurrection of Jesus. Luke 24 describes the appearance of Jesus to two men from Emmaus and finally his ascension into heaven.

3. Indications of time and place in the central section of the Gospel of Luke.

The central section of the Gospel of Luke consists of Luke 9:51 to 18:14.

This beautiful section contains miracles, sayings of the Lord and especially many parables. It is a section that strengthens the faith of the Christian.

In this section, Luke gives very little indication of the connection between the various incidents reported and the next.

Luke hardly gives any definite reference to *when and where these incidents took place*. Luke almost omits all definite time and place references. For example, in Luke 9:57 he says “As they were walking along the road” and in Luke 10:25 he says “On one occasion”. *Although Luke writes an orderly account (1:3), he does not intend to write a strict chronological account.*

There are, however, three clear time or place indications:

In Luke 9:51 we read, “As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.” In Luke 13:22 we read, “Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem.”

In Luke 17:11 we read, “Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus travelled along the border between Samaria and Galilee.”

These references are not parallel to those in the Gospel of John.

The Gospel of John shows that Jesus, during the final 6 months before his crucifixion, made more than one trip to Jerusalem. Some Christians think that Luke 9:51 is parallel to John 7:2, when Jesus travelled to Jerusalem to attend the Feast of Tabernacles; Luke 13:22 is parallel to John 11:17, when Jesus travelled to Bethany to raise Lazarus from the dead and Luke 17:11 is parallel to John 12:1, when Jesus came from Bethany to Jerusalem to attend the final Passover. However, there is nothing in the Gospel of Luke to show that these three passages correspond to those three passages in the Gospel of John!

These references are parallel to those in the Gospel of Mark.

Luke 9:51 has a tone of finality and is rather parallel to Mark 10:32, which describes Jesus’ final journey to Jerusalem. There are definite time and place links between Luke and Mark’s description of the Perea Ministry of Jesus. The Gospel of Mark states that Jesus travelled by way of Jericho and Bethany during his final journey to Jerusalem. This is written in Mark 10:32,46 and 11:1. Likewise, the Gospel of Luke indicates that Jesus travelled in the same order by way of Jericho and Bethany to Jerusalem. This is written in Luke 9:51; 10:30 and 10:38.

Luke uses the parallelistic style of writing.

Luke states the purpose of Jesus’ journey and thereafter twice retraces his steps and restates the purpose. The parallelistic style of writing is quite biblical. *The parallel passage functions as an amplification, a clarification, a reminder or a repetition of the first passage.* For example, the creation of the man and the woman in Genesis 2 is parallel to the creation of the man and the woman already stated in Genesis 1. The description of how John the Baptist was beheaded in Mark 6:17-29 is parallel to the statement that king Herod had beheaded him in Mark 6:14-16. The first letter of John and the book of Revelation are definitely parallelistic. We therefore conclude that the above three statements about journeying to Jerusalem are parallelistic and refer to one and *the same final journey of Jesus to Jerusalem.*

The central part of the Gospel of Luke has as its basis the Perea Ministry of Jesus.

These events took place between December A.D. 29 and April A.D. 30. The Perea Ministry of Jesus was about 4 months long. It is mainly a ministry of words and teachings of Jesus.

Although the Perea Ministry is the main background for the central section of the Gospel of Luke, Luke under the guidance of the Holy Spirit allows himself the freedom to include incidents and sayings from the Great Galilean Ministry and the Retirement Ministry in this part, just like Matthew did in his Gospel. *For Luke the topical connection is often more important than the chronological or geographical connection.*

H. THE THEME AND DIVISION OF THE GOSPEL OF LUKE.

Theme: **“Jesus is the sympathetic High Priest.”**

The Gospel of Luke may be divided into six parts. They are exactly the same as the parts in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. *Only the contents of the Perea Ministry of Jesus is far more extensive and should rather be described as a ministry of words and teachings.* For the sake of clarity, the two Judean ministries of Jesus, which are only recorded in the Gospel of John, are included in this division.

1. The preparation of Jesus.

Luke 1 and 2. Jesus is born in 5 B.C.

2. The inauguration of Jesus.

Luke 3:1 to 4:13. These events took place between December A.D. 26 and April A.D. 27. This period was about 4 months long.

3. The early Judean Ministry of Jesus.

Not described in Luke, but only in **John 2:13 to 4:47**. These events took place from April to December A.D. 27. This period was about 8 months long.

4. The Great Galilean Ministry of Jesus.

Luke 4:14 to 9:17. These events took place between December A.D. 27 and April A.D. 29. This period was about 16 months long.

5. The Retirement Ministry of Jesus.

Luke 9:18-50. These events took place from April to October A.D. 29. This period was about 6 months long.

6. The Later Judean Ministry of Jesus.

Not described in Luke, but only in **John 7:1 to 10:39**. These events took place from October to December A.D. 29. This period was about 2 months long.

7. The Perea Ministry of Jesus.

Luke 9:51 to 19:27. A very large part and is mainly a ministry of words and teachings of Jesus. These events took place between December A.D. 29 and April A.D. 30. This period was about 4 months long.

8. The death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

Luke 19:28 to 24:53. These events took place in April and May A.D. 30. This period was about seven weeks long.

I. THE MAIN MESSAGES OF THE GOSPEL OF LUKE.

1. The Gospel of Luke teaches that Jesus is the sympathetic High Priest.

Although each of the Four Gospels picture Jesus Christ as the long-awaited Messiah, sent by the Father and anointed by the Holy Spirit to be the people's great Prophet, sympathetic High Priest and eternal King, each Gospel has its own emphasis.

- Matthew emphasises Jesus as the Prophet,
- Mark emphasises Jesus as the King and
- Luke emphasises Jesus as the High Priest, his tender love and far-reaching sympathy.

The sympathy of Jesus towards the less privileged, the weak and the rejected.

In Hebrews 4:15 we read, “We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses.” The Gospel of Luke abound with stories, parables and teachings in which the mercy, kindness and love of Jesus Christ toward the less privileged, the weak, and the rejected come into expression. His love in action is revealed to the poor and the social outcasts, to children and women, to tax-collectors and sinners, to the sick and the handicapped, and to Samaritans and Gentiles.

The sympathy of Jesus towards women.

It is noticeable how much is written about Jesus' tenderness and high regard towards women. Note the large place he gives in chapter 1 and 2 to Mary and Elizabeth, the mothers of Jesus and John the Baptist. In chapter 2, he records the dedication to prayer of Anna the prophetess. In chapter 7, Jesus raises the only son of the widow of Nain and he compares the great love of a woman whose many sins had been forgiven to the lack of love of a self-righteous Pharisee. In chapter 8, only Luke mentions the names of Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna and the other women who were loyal followers of Jesus. Jesus regarded women and men, who put God's word into practice, with equal esteem (8:21). Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead. In chapter 13, he heals a woman who was crippled for 18 years. In chapter 15, he tells a parable of a woman who lost one of her ten coins and in chapter 18, a parable of a widow who persevered. In chapter 21, Jesus compared the gifts people give out of their wealth with the gift of a widow out of her poverty. In chapter 23, only Luke mentions that the women prepared spices and perfumes for the body of Jesus just after he died.

The sympathy of Jesus towards people in distress, regardless of their race.

In chapter 10, Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan to teach us that our real neighbour is anybody who is in distress; *anybody whom God places on our way.* In chapter 15, he tells the parable of the lost son to teach us that God

the Father is merciful to everyone who repents of his sinful life and returns to him. In chapter 18, he tells the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector to teach us that God regards those who humble themselves before God as righteous.

The sympathy of Jesus towards prominent leaders.

At least three times in the Gospel of Luke, in chapters 7, 11 and 14, we read that when Jesus was invited to eat with the Pharisees, he accepted. He did not avoid contact with anybody. He associated with despised sinners and he met with prominent leaders. *Every relationship was an opportunity to have influence for the kingdom of God and to glorify God.*

2. The Gospel of Luke teaches that rejection of the sympathy and mercy of Jesus results in judgement.

Jesus is not portrayed as only a good man, but as someone who demands that people repent, believe in him and follow him! In Luke 5:32 Jesus says, "I have come to call ... sinners to repentance." In Luke 15, he says that there is joy in heaven over even one sinner who repents (15:10). In Luke 3, all the people who repent, will be forgiven and should bear fruit in keeping with repentance (3:3,8). However, all the people who do not repent and are thus not gathered into his barn will be burned up with unquenchable fire (3:17). If people refuse to repent and reject his sympathy and mercy, then judgement will certainly follow.

For example, in Luke 10, Jesus condemns the cities of Galilee for failing to repent and warns that their judgement will be unbearable. He says, "He who rejects me rejects him who sent me" (10:13-16). In Luke 11:32 Jesus says, "The men of Nineveh will stand up in the judgement with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah and now one greater than Jonah is here."

In Luke 12, Jesus warns that the servant who does not do his will, will be cut to pieces and assigned to a place with the unbelievers (12:46). In Luke 13:2-3 he warns, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish." Therefore Jesus says in Luke 13:24, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to."

Luke pictures Jesus Christ as the Sympathetic High Priest in order to encourage people to repent and turn to him! However, *Luke records both God's mercy and God's sternness. If the kindness and mercy of God remains unanswered, then God's sternness and judgement will follow unfailingly. One of the purposes of God's sternness is to lead people to repentance. If people only preach the kindness of God and omit God's sternness, then they preach only half a gospel, which ultimately is no gospel at all, because it misleads people.*

3. The Gospel of Luke teaches that Jesus calls people to discipleship.

The calling to discipleship.

After his baptism Jesus invited John and Andrew to spend the day with him¹⁶. Andrew brought his brother Peter to Jesus¹⁷. The next day Jesus called Philip to follow him¹⁸ and he brought Nathanael to Jesus¹⁹. Later Jesus moved to Capernaum (4:31²⁰) in Galilee. The crowd of disciples²¹ of Jesus had on and off contact with Jesus and often listened to his teaching. One day Jesus called the fishermen Peter and the two sons of Zebedee to follow him and become fishers of men (5:1-11). A little later he called Levi (Matthew), the tax-collector, to follow him (5:27-31). About a year later (before the Passover of 27 A.D.)²² Jesus prayed throughout the night and called his first 12 disciples to follow him and stay with him in order to train them (6:12-16)²³. His 12 disciples followed him for longer than two years (until the last Passover of 30 A.D.)

A *disciple* means a follower of Jesus who learns from Jesus. In Luke 9:23 Jesus says, that anyone may choose to come after him. Jesus makes it clear that anyone may become his disciple. There is no barrier of age, sex, race or education.

The requirements for discipleship.

In Luke 9:23 he says, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." Jesus makes it clear that there are requirements for becoming his disciple. In Luke 14, he states three such requirements: In Luke 14:26 Jesus says that a disciple must not allow any of his family members to hinder him from following Jesus. In Luke 14:27 he says that a disciple must be willing to suffer rejection and persecution for the sake of Jesus. And in Luke 14:33 he says that a disciple must not allow worldly possessions or activities to hinder him from doing the will of Jesus.

The training to discipleship.

¹⁶ John 1:35-39

¹⁷ John 1:41

¹⁸ John 1:43

¹⁹ John 1:44-51

²⁰ Mark 2:1; John 2:12

²¹ Mark 3:7

²² John 2:13

²³ Mark 3:14-19

In Luke 6:40 Jesus says, “A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.” The purpose of Jesus is to train his disciples to become more and more like himself. That is why he *trains their character*. For example, in Luke 6:42 he says, “First take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” He trains his disciples to hear the words of God and to put them into practice (6:47). He challenges them to try out the truths that he teaches them. For example, after teaching them in the parable of the Good Samaritan who their neighbour really is, he says, “Go and do likewise” (10:37). After warning them that they will be persecuted in the world, he says, “Whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God. But he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God” (12:8-9). And he sends them out two by two to preach the kingdom of God (9:2; 10:1).

The commitment to discipleship.

In Luke 9:62 he warns, “No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.” And in Luke 14:28 he challenges his disciples to first sit down and estimate the cost of discipleship, so that they would not be like a man who began to build a tower, but was not able to finish it. Jesus challenges his disciples *to be finishers!*

4. The Gospel of Luke is a book of truth and doctrine, teaching us what to believe.

Apart from God’s special revelation in the Bible, people are living in darkness. The ultimate question that faces all people in life and after death is written in Job 9:2, “How can a man be just before God?” People must know the truth about God, about themselves and about how to relate to God. What people everywhere in the world need is the truth, true doctrine! The Gospel of Luke is a book of doctrine. What are some doctrines people must believe?

The answer to the question, “Who is Jesus?”

The Gospel of Luke teaches that Jesus is born of the woman Mary, but also that Mary was a virgin and that her conception of Jesus was brought about by the work of God. Thus Luke teaches that Jesus is completely man and completely God (1:35).

The answer to the question, “Who will save me?”

Luke 19:10 teaches that Jesus came to seek and to save people that are lost. Only Jesus can save them from the guilt and shame of sin, from the power of sin in this world, from the eternal judgement in hell and from the presence of sin and all evil when believers enter heaven. Only Jesus Christ can bring people into paradise.

The answer to the question, “What must I do to be saved?”

Luke 8:12 teaches that a person must believe the words in the Bible in order to be saved.

The answer to the question, “How much does God care for my life here on earth?”

In Luke 18:7-8, Jesus teaches that God will quickly answer the prayers of his people and help them in their need. In Luke 22:31 Jesus promises that he will pray for Peter so that his faith may not fail. Luke stresses that God is sovereign and will fulfil his plan of salvation for his own people! He teaches what Paul says in Philippians 1:6, “He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus”!

5. The Gospel of Luke is a book of practical ethics, teaching us how to live.

Apart from God’s special revelation in the Bible, people live in spiritual and moral darkness. They would not be able to know how to live in order to please God. Although people tend to boast about their religious accomplishments, they cannot please the God of the Bible. For example:

The answer to the question, “How should Christians treat their enemies?”

In Luke 6:27-28 Jesus teaches, “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”

The answer to the question, “How should Christians treat those who wrong them?”

In Luke 6:37 Jesus teaches, “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.”

The answer to the question, “How should Christians treat Christians from another Christian group?”

In Luke 9:50 Jesus teaches, “Do not stop him, for whoever is not against you is for you.”

The answer to the question, “How should Christian leaders lead their people?”

In Luke 22:24-30, Jesus teaches that a real Christian leader does not lord it over those entrusted to him, but always serves his people.

6. The Gospel of Luke is a book of comfort, teaching us why we should rejoice.

Christians live in a world full of despair. Most of the songs in the world are superficial and fail to satisfy. But the gospel brings joy! The angel said to the shepherds, “Do not be afraid. I bring you *good news of great joy* that will be for all the people. Today... the Saviour, Christ the Lord, has been born!” (2:10-11).

In the beginning of the Gospel of Luke there are five songs:

- *The song of Elizabeth is about love:* Although she is much older than Mary, she genuinely rejoices in the joy of her much younger relative. This is an example of 1 Corinthians 13:4, “Love does not envy”.
- *The song of Mary is about faith:* She rejoices in God as her Saviour, the Mighty God, the Holy God, the Merciful God, the Helper in time of need, the God who fulfils his covenant to Abraham. Mary professes her faith in song.
- *The song of Zechariah is about hope:* He praises God for the hope which Jesus Christ is bringing. By his presence, his teaching, his forgiveness, his tender mercy and his deeds of power, Jesus Christ will take away the despair and hopelessness of people, so that they will be able to serve God without fear and in holiness and righteousness as long as they live.
- *The song of the angels is about adoration:* They glorify God for his indescribable gift of his only Son to save fallen man.
- *The song of Simeon is about resignation:* He recognises God’s absolute sovereignty in his personal life and in the lives of Jews and Gentiles.

In the middle of the Gospel of Luke Jesus himself rejoices in the joy of his disciples about their salvation. He says to his disciples, “Rejoice that your names are written in heaven”.

And he says to his Father in heaven, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned, and revealed them to little children” (10:20-21). And he says to the tax collectors and sinners gathered around him, “I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (15:10).

In the end of the Gospel of Luke there is a statement that the disciples had *great joy* and continually praised God (24:52-53).

7. The Gospel of Luke is a book of prophecy, teaching us what to expect in the future.

Jesus himself proves that the Old Testament prophecies about the coming Messiah are being fulfilled in him.

Particularly, the prophecy of Isaiah 53. In Luke 22:37 he says, “It is written: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors’; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfilment.”

Jesus himself emphasises the need to study prophecy with a believing heart.

In Luke 24:25-27 he says, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah, the Christ, have to suffer these things and enter his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. This is why the apostle Matthew could quote so many prophecies in his Gospel that had been fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Jesus reveals certain things about life after death, which otherwise would have remained unknown.

In Luke 12:47-48, he teaches that in the final judgement, people will be judged according to their knowledge of God’s will. He teaches, “The servant who knows his master’s will and ... does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows.” In Luke chapter 16, he teaches the reality of heaven and hell after death. He teaches that there will be comfort in heaven and torment in hell. He also teaches that it is impossible for the dead to make any contact with the people still living on earth.