

# Gospel According to Luke

**Authorship:** It is almost uncontested that Luke and Acts were written by Luke, the physician and traveling companion of the Apostle Paul. In the book of Acts there is a whole set of “We” passages. Luke often says, “we, they, and us.” His Gospel account is inclusive. Luke was not a Jew but a Gentile.

**Date:** Most scholars believe the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts were written sometime between AD 70 and AD 90.

## Unique Features:

1. Written to Theophilus. The name Theophilus means friend of God. Some claim that this might have been a literary device. We are uncertain if there was a historical person named, Theophilus or if Luke used the name as a literary device to gain an audience.
2. Luke emphasizes Jesus’ relationship with social outcast (Shepherds, tax collectors, short Zaccheus, Pharisees, and thieves).
3. Luke emphasizes Jesus’ relationship with nobodies. Such as children, women (especially of questionable reputations).
4. Luke shows Jesus’ emphasis on prayer. Luke shows the emphasis that Jesus gave prayer and how He taught His disciples to pray.
5. Luke has an emphasis on the Holy Spirit.
6. Luke emphasizes Jesus’ teaching on wealth and material possessions. Material possessions are considered morally neutral (junk). Luke shows that there is nothing that robs people of heaven more than possessions.

## Purposes of Luke:

1. To address the delayed Parousia.

Hans Conzelmann wrote, *The Theology of St. Luke*. A redaction criticism book in which he says the issue that Luke was addressing was the delayed parousia (Second Coming). Conzelmann says that Luke provides a framework that can deal with this delay.

2. To combat Gnosticism.

It was the greatest threat to Christianity. Gnosticism could not confess that Jesus was both God and man. About 2/3 of the NT was written to combat Gnosticism. Gnostics argued that Jesus was just a man or that he was not a man at all. Gnostics rejected the concept that Jesus was both God and man. Luke and the other biblical writers were anti-Gnostic. A good book to read concerning Gnosticism is *Luke and the Gnostics* by Charles Talbert. Many of our Church Creeds came about as an effort to combat Gnosticism. Luke gives us the birth account with the importance of humans emphasized, the Gesemene experience where we see Jesus’ sweat drops are like blood. The point Luke makes is only human beings agonize like that.

3. To give an accurate authoritative account of the Gospel.

Luke wants to set the record straight but it doesn’t appear to be the main purpose.

4. To address the Jew-Gentile problem.

The problem centered in a question. Do the Gentiles have to become Jews first before becoming Christians? The main purpose Of Luke was to respond to this crises. It was a major problem for the Jews who had become Christians. Luke shows how Jesus was born into Judaism. How He called Jewish men to become His disciples. How He went to Jerusalem only to be rejected, despised and crucified. Do Gentiles have to become Jews first? Well, the Jews rejected their Messiah and were more concerned with themselves than others. Luke shows how Jesus cared fro the social outcast, women, children and Gentiles. It is interesting that when the announcement of Jesus’ birth was made public it was first given to the shepherds (outcast) and not to the priest, not to the Rabbis. Shepherds were perceived as crooks, they gazed upon other people’s land. Even today the bedouin (modern shepherds in Israel) are considered social outcast.

Is God’s love really available to all people or is it just for a selected few?

\* Luke is about the radical availability of grace.

**Sources:** Elwell, Walker A. and Robert W. Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1998). Jensen, Irving L. *Simply Understanding the Bible*. (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publications, 1990).