**The Gospel of Luke**

**Witness to the Gentiles - #1**

**General Introduction**

*Welcome! as George begins his 11th year teaching Wednesday nights at East 91st Street Christian Church. This class on Luke will continue for 8 weeks through Wednesday, Nov. 19. The current plan is to take our customary break from class during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays and resume class in early January.*

**Luke, Acts and Paul**

1. Luke does not put his name on this book nor can we deduce his name from the text of the Gospel. The Gospel is not like the Letters of Paul.
2. From the very beginning we learn that Luke depends on those who wrote before him (1:2)
3. From the style and the presentation of the material he wrote, Luke is an educated man because he knows how to write. He knew good Greek and also possessed a good knowledge of the Greek Old Testament (OT), the Septuagint.
4. The Gospel of Luke is certainly a companion with the Book of Acts from the early Christian history. Note “*all that Jesus began to do and teach*” (Luke 1:3, Acts 1:10); both works were written for “Theophilus.”
5. The name of Luke appeared in most of the Greek Manuscripts such as P75 dating from the end of the second century.

**Luke in the New Testament (NT)**

1. Luke is mentioned in the NT 3 times.
	1. Philemon 2:4 as the fellow worker with Paul.
	2. Colossians 4:14, Luke adds his greeting to the church in Colossae and in this Letter is called “the beloved physician.”
	3. 2 Timothy 4:11, Luke seems to have been the best traveler with Paul, for Luke is called the “the sole companion.”
2. In old tradition of the church, Luke is identified as “the brother whose fame in preaching the Gospel is known throughout all the churches” (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on II Corinthians*, 18:1)
3. Luke is an eyewitness of many of the events in Acts where he uses what is called the “we sections” - Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1; 28:16.

**Oldest witness to the Third Gospel**

Here is a description/discussion of Luke’s Gospel from a single eighth century manuscript, published by Muratori in 1740. The text suffers from barbarous spelling.

Below is the 8th century text translated from Latin:

“The third book of the Gospel is that according to Luke. Luke, the well-known physician, after the ascension of Christ, when Paul had taken with him as one zealous for the law, composed it in his own name, according to [the general] belief.

Yet he himself had not seen the Lord in the flesh; and therefore, as he was able to ascertain events, so indeed he begins to tell the story from the birth of John. The fourth of the Gospels is that of John, [one] of the disciples. To his fellow disciples and bishops, who had been urging him [to write], he said, “Fast with me from today to three days, and what will be revealed to each one let us tell it to one another.”

In the same night it was revealed to Andrew, [one] of the apostles, that John should write down all things in his own name while all of them should review it. And so, though various elements may be taught in the individual books of the Gospels, nevertheless it makes no difference to the faith of believers, since by the one sovereign Spirit all things have been declared in all [the Gospels]: concerning the nativity, concerning the passion, concerning the resurrection, concerning life with his disciples, and concerning his twofold coming; the first in lowliness when he was despised, which has taken place; the second glorious in royal power, which is still in the future.

What marvel is it then, if John so consistently mentions these particular points also in his Epistles, saying about himself, “What we have seen with our eyes and heard with our ears and our hands have handled, these things we have written to you?” For in this way he professes [himself] to be not only an eyewitness and hearer, but also a writer of all the marvelous deeds of the Lord, in their order.

Moreover, the acts of all the apostles were written in one book. For “most excellent Theophilus” Luke compiled the individual events that took place in his presence — as he plainly shows by omitting the martyrdom of Peter as well as the departure of Paul from the city [of Rome] when he journeyed to Spain. As for the Epistles of Paul, they themselves make clear to those desiring to understand, which ones [they are], from what place, or for what reason they were sent.

First of all, to the Corinthians, prohibiting their heretical schisms; next, to the Galatians, against circumcision; then to the Romans he wrote at length, explaining the order (or, plan) of the Scriptures, and also that Christ is their principle (or, main theme).

It is necessary for us to discuss these one by one, since the blessed apostle Paul himself, following the example of his predecessor John, writes by name to only seven churches in the following sequence: To the Corinthians first, to the Ephesians second, to the Philippians third, to the Colossians fourth, to the Galatians fifth, to the Thessalonians sixth, to the Romans seventh. It is true that he writes once more to the Corinthians and to the Thessalonians for the sake of admonition, yet it is clearly recognizable that there is one Church spread throughout the whole extent of the earth.

For John also in the Apocalypse, though he writes to seven churches, nevertheless speaks to all. [Paul also wrote] out of affection and love one to Philemon, one to Titus, and two to Timothy; and these are held sacred in the esteem of the Church catholic for the regulation of ecclesiastical discipline. There is current also [an epistle] to the Laodiceans, [and] another to the Alexandrians, [both] forged in Paul’s name to [further] the heresy of Marcion, and several others which cannot be received into the catholic Church for it is not fitting that gall be mixed with honey. Moreover, the epistle of Jude and two of the above-mentioned (or, bearing the name of) John are counted (or, used) in the catholic [Church; and [the book of] Wisdom, written by the friends of Solomon in his honor. We receive only the apocalypses of John and Peter, though some of us are not willing that the latter be read in church.

*(See, for full treatment and study: Bruce Metzger's The Canon of the New Testament, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 191-201)*

**Witness of Irenaeus**

A second witness to Luke’s Gospel comes from Irenaeus in his book *Against Heresies*, 3:1,14, for he wrote, “Luke was inseparable from Paul and was his collaborator in the Gospel…” And in the third century, Tertullian wrote against the heretic Marcion, “Luke was a man of the apostolic times but not an apostle” (4:5, 3)

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**Was Luke a Jew?**

1. Luke’s Greek is very good, and he shows no trace of Semitic words except the word “Amen.” Was he a Gentile? That seems possible because he had no interest in the Jesus’ debate with the Pharisees and their attitude to the Law. But the parables of our Lord in chapter 15 compose the harshest criticism of the Oral Law – the Halakah – of Judaism, which we shall deal with later on.
2. Luke is more close to Paul than it appears to the ordinary reader. Luke presents the Gospel – the Good News – to Gentiles.
3. Luke was a physician who had acquired a good Greek medical education. W.K. Hobart published a detailed comparison in 1882 of the language of Luke and that of Greek Medical books of Hippocrates and Galen. He noticed that “suffering from a very high fever” in :Luke 4:38 is technical way of diagnosing. Also in Luke 5:12, the man “was covered with leprosy.” But like all old history all are debated.

**Outline of the Gospel**

1:1-4 The Prologue.

1:5-2:52 The Infancy narrative.

3:1-4:13 The beginning ministry of our Lord Jesus.

4:14-9:50 Jesus’ ministry in Galle

9:51-19:27 Jesus’ Exodus to Jerusalem and his travel, which is the core of the Gospel.

19:28-21:38 Jesus’ ministry in Jerusalem.

22:1-23:56 The Passion and the death of Jesus.

23:56-24:53 The Resurrection and the glory of Jesus.

**The Narrative about Jesus as the Good News**

The outline of the Gospel of Luke, like the other three Gospels, is a narrative of the birth, life, teaching, resurrection of Jesus.

**What is a narrative?**

1. A narrative is a story told publically of something recounted in the form of a set of events, an account of them, and relevant sayings: the telling of a happening or connected series of happenings.

1. A narrative aims at establishing that something is worth listening to. It is usually about actions or events that affect human beings. The meaning of each part of every event in the narrative is aiming at telling something new and normally is part of the whole story.
2. To say what this event means is to say how it is related or connected to the whole story. To ask the meaning of an event is to ask how it contributed to the story in which it occurs. It is the connections or relations between events that gives the final meaning of the story.
3. The meaning of any event in the narrative is produced not only by individuals but also by groups, communities, societies and cultures, which are maintained through language and agreed-upon understandings. This agreement becomes the term of references to reveal:
	1. What has to be done in a time of crisis?
	2. What can the community celebrate together and how does it celebrate?

1. A narrative can create the identity of a group and their confession and even recognize their social, military, and the whole relationship within this community and its attitude to others.
2. Groups, communities, societies and cultures also preserve collections of narratives so that all can participate and share or reject what the community can share or reject.

**The most important functions of a narrative**

1. It links individual human actions and events to the whole community. Stories fill our lives in the way that water fills the lives of fish. Stories are so all pervasive that we practically cease to be aware of them.
2. The products of our narrative are to fill our cultural and social environment. We create narrative descriptions for ourselves and for others about our own past actions, and we develop stories or accounts that give sense to the behavior of others.
3. The narratives of the world are without number … the narrative is present at all times, in all places, in all societies; the history of narrative begins with the history of mankind; there does not exist, and never has existed, a people without narratives.

*(See, Stephen Denning, The Springboard: How Storytelling Ignites Action in Knowledge-Era Organizations. Boston, London, Butterworth Heinemann, October 2000.*

*Donald E. Polkinghorne, Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences. Albany N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1988.*

*Roland Barthes, Introduction to the Structural Analysis of the Narrative, Occasional Paper, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, 1996).*

**The OT Narrative that shaped the NT narrative**

If you find the above notes difficult to understand, let me help you.

1. The OT starts with two great narratives: Creation, and Redemption. Creation goes as a narrative into the entire OT and you can see it more clearly in the Psalms (Ps 79 onward to 147).
2. Redemption comes to us in the call of humanity through Abraham, the election of Israel, the call of the prophets, the establishment of the kingdom and exile, return and the hope of a further redemption.

**The NT Narrative that shaped our Worship and Doctrine**

1. Perhaps you ask, how did this happen? The answer is Christmas is at our doors, we read the narrative in every celebration.
2. How about doctrine? It will be the same answer, as we have not just Easter, the Feast of the Resurrection of Jesus, but the commonly used confession of faith, *“Christ died for our sins and was raised for our eternal life.”* This is coming from the last chapters of the Four Gospels.
3. Just like the OT, we celebrate the Works of Redemption but we also affirm that Jesus is the Logos Creator in three different places. We overlook the first, that is the first chapter of John, and look at Colossians 1:15 and Hebrews 1:1-3. The genealogy of Jesus in Mathew and Luke, especially in Matthew, where the Gospel begins, *“The* [*book*](http://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs.ashx?ll=g&t=kjv&sn=976) *of the* [*generation*](http://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs.ashx?ll=g&t=kjv&sn=1078) *of* [*Jesus*](http://www.biblestudytools.com/interlinear-bible/strongs.ashx?ll=g&t=kjv&sn=2424)” is the birth or the Bible.”
4. If we read the Prologue of Luke carefully we can notice:
	1. The he is writing to declare what has been fulfilled, “*In as much many have undertaken to set down an orderly narrative of the events that have been fulfilled among us,”(1:1)*
	2. Then Luke proceeds to say: “*just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word*” (1:2). The eyewitnesses is the backbone of truth in the Law of Judaism.
	3. Especially in a very precise way, “*so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed.”* The last word in ***katechethis,*** or, “catechism.” We learn from the narrative or the story of Jesus all truth about Jesus.

**The Prologue of the Gospel**

Luke 1:1-4

***1*** *In as much many have undertaken to set down an orderly narrative of the events that have been fulfilled among us,* ***2*** *just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word,* *3 I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus,* ***4*** *so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed.”*

**Notes of the text**

**Our Christian Faith and the Narrative of Jesus**

1. Luke is the most conscious writer who wrote as a historian. To cover the story of Jesus from Birth to Ascension.
2. He presented this story as a fulfillment of prophecy of the revelation of God the Father. It is the story of salvation. So it is the Good news.
3. Luke referred to what was written before him as trust worthy witness. Theophilus was his pen friend.

**Catch Words**

Verse 1 “*In as much*” – the polarity of other works was written before.

Verse 1 “*many*” - see its use in Acts 24:2, Hebrews 1:1. This word like the above word is a legitimate way of appealing to “witness.”

Verse 1 “narrative” – the Greek work ***diegesis*** means “narrative.” Writing a narrative was known in Judaism as a witness. The Prophet Habakkuk (1:5) says, “… *for I am working a work in your days that you will not believe unless someone tells it.*”

Verse 1 “*events*” – precisely the life of Jesus as the source of all that we need to know:

a. About Jesus

b. About God the Father

c. How this knowledge can change and lead our life.

Verse 1 “handed down” - not only orally but also written. See some use of this handing down in (1 Corinthians 11:2, 23, and 15:3, 2 Peter 2:21, Jude 3). There was no handing down without an “eyewitness.” Two of these said that could not speak but of what they have heard from Jesus, and they are called the “servants of the word.”

Quiz and a Contest

1. How many doctrines do you know are in the narrative of Jesus as recorded in the Four Gospels?
2. Which doctrine can you see immediately?

These are very hard questions. Try not to rush when you prepare your answer.

George Bebawi

***Pope’s Notes***

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