



Introduction and Background

 Luke

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A few months ago we finished the Gospel of Matthew. Today we begin the Gospel of Luke. This will work well since Matthew and Luke are good to study as companions. The reason I chose Luke was because I've been teaching Acts at home and I am enjoying the narrative so much. I love narrative and Luke is narrative. It's the narrative that precedes Acts. The stories go together. So, as always we begin with an introduction and background to the book dealing with issues like the approach, the author, the date, the sources, the message, the type of literature, some of the uniquenesses and so forth. As for our approach, we will follow the grammatical-historical-contextual approach. By grammatical we are referring to the study of the grammar of the original language in which Luke was written. This involves word studies to determine usage and syntax to determine how the parts of each sentence relate to one another. Additionally, we also study the manuscript data in order to determine the best reading where there are variants. The original language Luke wrote in is a matter of dispute among scholars. Some claim Latin was the original language on the basis of a statement in the Muratorian Fragment which uses a technical term of Luke, referring to him as a "legal expert" who accompanied Paul and therefore wrote 'in the name' of Paul or 'in accordance with the opinion' of Paul. But there are others that argue in favor of Koine Greek as the original language. Koine is the term for 'common' and refers to the common Greek spoken by various peoples in the Roman Empire. It is my conclusion that the Gospel of Luke was originally written in Koine Greek. So we study the grammar of Koine Greek. That's the first part of our approach to studying Scripture, the grammatical aspect. The second aspect is the historical aspect. By historical we are referring to the historical situation or setting during which Luke wrote His gospel. This relates in part to the date of authorship, which we will look into shortly, but we are on safe ground stating that it was written sometime in the 1st century. Therefore, as for historical background we need to know something of Rome, the empire that ruled the region, its rulers, as well as the Pharisees and Sadducees, the Temple, various customs and so forth. This involves reading other documents written at the time so that we are able to fill in other historical details not directly mentioned by Luke. We do this with caution since we do not consider these other documents inspired. But they are, nonetheless, helpful in shedding light on the historical circumstances. The third aspect is contextual. By contextual we study in terms of a radius of contexts, meaning we start with the immediate context, then move outward to the pericope context, the section context, the book context, the testament

context and the whole bible context, keeping in mind that the author has a particular argument in view in his book, so that the interpretation has to fit within the argument of the whole book, which I consider to be the determining factor when interpreting a passage. So our approach is known as the grammatical-historical-contextual approach and we will exclude other elements commonly added to this approach, such as theological. The addition of the theological element means the interpreter is consciously and purposely interjecting his theology into the text, so that the outcome inevitably verifies his own theology. I consider this to be eisegesis, a reading into the text of what one wants to find, rather than exegesis, a reading out of the text what is there. Therefore, the theological component, that is so often used to interpret, is something I am seeking to suppress so that I do not bring my theological bias to the text. As such we will employ only the grammatical, historical and contextual components.

As to the author, it is traditionally assigned to Luke, although Luke never names himself as the author. In fact, Luke's name is only used three times in the entire NT, none of which are in Luke or Acts, which are traditionally assigned to him (Col 4:14; 2 Tim 4:11 and Phil 24). Even so, you have probably never questioned that the Gospel of Luke and Acts were authored by Luke. So why do we think Luke wrote the Gospel of Luke and Acts? Because of internal clues and external evidences. Let's look at external evidences first, because the early church widely regarded the third gospel as written by Luke. So we want to look at some of their statements. Later students began with these early statements and then looked for verification in the Scriptures. First, "*Kata Loukon*," "According to Luke," is the ancient title that was added to this gospel at a very early date."¹ Second, the Muratorian fragment has this statement, "The third book of the gospel: according to Luke. After the ascension of Christ, Luke the physician, whom Paul had taken along with him as a legal expert, wrote {the record} down in his own name in accordance with {Paul's} opinion. He himself, however, never saw the Lord in the flesh and therefore as far as he could follow {the course of events}, began to tell it from the nativity of John."² This is a very clear statement, that very early on, Luke was considered the author of the third gospel, and that he was a physician and traveling companion of Paul. I want to read another statement, this one by F.F. Bruce, who wrote the most authoritative book on *The Canon of Scripture*. He's a renowned scholar. I don't agree with all of his views, but that's not saying much because I only agree 100% with my own views. Suffice it to say, if F. F. Bruce has written something and it isn't read, it's considered neglect in many circles. At old Dallas Theological Seminary, you had to use Bruce for your exegetical book studies. It was a requirement. Bruce says this, "Luke, says the compiler {of the Muratorian fragment}, was not an eyewitness or hearer of Christ. What then was the nature of his authority? It derived from his association with Paul. He accompanied Paul, it is said, as a legal expert. This choice of words is a powerful argument in favour of regarding Latin as the original language of the document: it reflects a feature of Roman provincial administration. A Roman provincial governor had a legal expert (*iuris studiosus*; the phrase used here) on his staff. This expert drafted legal documents 'in the name' or 'in accordance with the opinion' of his superior; so Luke (it is implied), having been attached to Paul's staff, issued his writings in his own name but in accordance with Paul's opinion. Luke's writings, that is to say, are endowed

with apostolic authority although they do not appear under the apostle's name."³ I hope you're following. What Bruce is saying is that while the Gospel of Luke was not written by an apostle, or even an eye witness, it was written under the auspices of someone who was an apostle, Paul, so it is an authoritative book of Scripture. I agree with that; he's trying to show apostolic authority. Third, external witness to Luke's authorship is the Anti-Marcionite Prologue of Luke where it says, "The repose of the holy apostle Luke the evangelist is the twentieth of the month of September." So Luke is referred to as "the evangelist," which is another way of saying "the gospel." They also refer to him as being an apostle, which I don't agree with, but nevertheless. The Prologue goes on to give some details about Luke. "The holy Luke is an Antiochene," he was from Antioch, "Syrian by race," which would make him a Gentile, "physician by trade. As his writings indicate, of the Greek speech he was not ignorant." It seems his first language was Greek, which would evidence his Gentile background, or possibly he was a Hellenistic Jew, I don't want to throw out either of these possibilities, or even the possibility that he was a native Jew, but we will look at that issue later. This author clearly thought he was a Gentile or Hellenistic Jew. Further, "He was a disciple of the apostles, and afterward followed Paul until his confession, serving the Lord undistractedly, for he neither had any wife nor procreated sons. [A man] of eighty-four* years, he slept in Thebes, the metropolis of Boeotia, full of the holy spirit. He, when the gospels were already written down, that according to Matthew in Judea, but that according to Mark in Italy, instigated by the holy spirit, in parts of Achaia wrote down this gospel," which would make in the order of the gospels; Matthew first, Mark second, and Luke third, and the location he wrote it in Achaia, "he who was taught not only by the apostle, who was not with the Lord in the flesh," who was Luke with that was not with the Lord in the flesh? That would be Paul, "but also by the other apostles, who were with the Lord," that would be Peter, John, etc... So Luke would have been instructed by all of them, "even making clear this very thing himself in the preface," they're talking about verses 1-4, Luke's sources for writing the gospel were apostolic, "that the others were written down before his," referring to Matthew and Mark, "and that it was necessary that he accurately expound for the gentile faithful the entire economy in his narrative, lest they, detained by Jewish fables, be held by a sole desire for the law, or lest, seduced by heretical fables and stupid instigations, they slip away from the truth." Their making clear that Luke wrote to Gentile believers, which is why this gospel is such a good companion to Matthew's gospel, which was written to Jewish believers. "It being necessary, then, immediately in the beginning we receive report of the nativity of John, who is the beginning of the gospel, who was the forerunner of our Lord Jesus Christ, and a partaker in the perfecting of the people, and also in the induction of baptism, and a partaker of his passion" [sufferings], probably referring to John the Baptist's arrest and execution by beheading. "and of the fellowship of the spirit. Zechariah the prophet, one of the twelve, made mention of this economy. And indeed afterward this same Luke wrote the Acts of the Apostles." So there Luke is named as the author of Luke *before* he wrote Acts, which has an impact on the date. "And later John the apostle from the twelve first wrote down the apocalypse on the isle of Pathmos, then the gospel in Asia." That final statement is very interesting. They place John's writing of the Revelation before John's writing of the Gospel of John. Very, very interesting. But we're not studying John, we're studying Luke, and there was so much interesting stuff in there, I just had to take you through it. Fourth,

Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 3.1.1, stated, "Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him." And also other later Christian writers. The external evidence is strongly in favor of Luke authoring the third gospel and it was on the basis of these statements that men eventually sought to discover internal evidences that pointed to Luke. So let's turn to those. Fifth, Luke is deduced as the author from the fact that he is the only one of Paul's traveling companions in the Book of Acts whose life and movements can be reconciled with Paul's and evidenced in the "we" sections of Acts. The "we" sections in Acts are where the author of Acts is including himself in the group with Paul at certain places during Paul's missionary journeys (cf Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16). If Luke is that person, and only he and Titus are even possible, but Titus has never been assigned Luke-Acts. Turn to one of the "we" sections where the author is with Paul, Acts 16:6, "They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas." In this section Paul, Silas and Timothy are referred to with the pronouns "they" and "them," so it is evident that the author of Acts is not with them. Then in verse 10 we read, "When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them." Suddenly the author switches to "we," thus including himself as one of Paul's traveling companions at this point. "So putting out to sea from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis." The author stays with Paul until at least verse 17, and it is clear by 17:1 that he was no longer with them. "Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews." Since Luke is the only one whose life and movements could have coincided with Paul's in these "we" sections, as the geographical movements of the others do not fit, we deduce that Luke, in accordance with early writers in Church history, was the author of both Luke and Acts and they are therefore two volumes of the same work. Sixth, confirming this, both Luke and Acts are addressed to the same individual, Theophilus. Turn to Luke 1:3. "...it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus;" And now turn to Acts 1:1. "The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach..." Harmonizing these two verses we learn that not only are both Luke and Acts written to the same person, they are written by the same person. Further, since the author in Acts refers to a previous account, we conclude that Luke was written before Acts, so that they are really two volumes by the same author, and we refer to them as Luke-Acts. Seventh, both Luke and Acts have a common writing style. In other words, the syntax and flow of the Greek is similar, indicating the same author. Eighth, both Luke and Acts have a common purpose, to narrate the events that transpired in a sequential manner. This is stated explicitly in Luke 1:3 but not in Acts. Nevertheless, Acts does narrate the following events in a sequential manner, just like Luke. The common purpose indicates the author is one and the same and that the two books are really two volumes of the same basic work, composed to Theophilus and for the purpose of setting forth the sequence of events as they transpired.

Having concluded that the author is Luke, what do we know about him? This is a little difficult because apart from tradition in the Muratorian fragment and Anti-Marcionite prologue and the “we” sections in Acts that seem to imply Luke’s presence, only three passages mention him explicitly by name, none of which are in the two books attributed to him as author. First, from the Anti-Marcionite Prologue we learn that Luke was an Antiochene. This means he was from Antioch. There were two Antioch’s in ancient Rome. The Prologue says he was from the Syrian Antioch. This is where the early church had a strong following in Acts 13. It is where Paul and Barnabas set out on the first missionary journeys. The Prologue also indicates that he was a Gentile because of his origins in Antioch of Syria and because of his command of the Greek language. It says that he was a disciple, that he did not marry, nor have any children and that he lived to be 84 years of age, dying in Thebes, which is in modern day Greece. Second, from Scripture we know that he was a traveling companion of Paul. Turn to Col 4:14. In Col 4:10ff, Paul is sending greetings to those at Colosse from those who were with him. In verse 14 we read, “Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings...” For Luke to send his greetings via Paul’s letter, he had to be with Paul. So we know Luke was a traveling companion of Paul. Third, since the letter to the Colossians was written by Paul when he was imprisoned in Rome, we know that Luke was with Paul in Rome. Paul was imprisoned twice in Rome. This letter was written during his first imprisonment between AD60-62. So we know Luke was with him sometime within those two years. Fourth, we know that Luke was with Paul during his second imprisonment in Rome. Turn to 2 Tim 4:11. 2 Timothy is Paul’s last epistle; he wrote it to Timothy when he was imprisoned under Nero around AD67. In 2 Tim 4:11, Paul says, “Only Luke is with me.” This shows not only that Luke was with him in this most dire of circumstances, but that he was very close to Paul. He had spent much time with Paul during both of his imprisonments. Fifth, Luke was a physician. Turn back to Col 4:14. We showed before how this verse indicates Luke was a traveling companion of Paul. This time we show that he was also a physician. “Luke, the beloved physician.” This is what most Christians already know about Luke, and much is made of his use of medical terminology. While he does use some medical terminology, it is not as frequent and obvious as most might assume. Nevertheless, it is quite true he was a physician. Kenneth Boa and Bruce Wilkinson, in their *Talk through the Bible*, said, “It has been suggested that Luke may have been a Greek physician to a Roman family who at some point was set free and given Roman citizenship.”⁴ This may well be the case, but this brings us to the question that is on everyone’s mind, which is whether Luke was a Jew or a Gentile. There is actually a third option, since the Jews were divided in Acts 6 into native Jews, Jews who lived in the land, and Hellenistic Jews, Jews who lived in the dispersion. Sixth, I am 99% confident that Luke was a Gentile; only 1% of me still considers the possibility he was a Hellenistic Jew. This is different from what I have taught before. Previously I’ve taught he was a Jew based on Rom 3:2, “the oracles of God were entrusted to the Jews.” So, why did I change my mind? Here is why. First, combining Col 4:10-11 and Phil 24 is proof positive that Luke was not among the circumcision. Look at Col 4:10-11 and at the same time look at Phil 24. In Col 4:10 Paul is writing on behalf of people with him who are sending greetings. He mentions “Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner...and also Barnabas’ cousin Mark...” verse 11, “and also Jesus who is called Justus; these are the only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are from the circumcision.” And I looked at this word “only” in the Greek and it uses *μονοι*

from which we get 'mono,' and it means "only. So "only" three "fellow workers" with Paul that were "from the circumcision"; Aristarchus, Mark, and Justus. Luke is not placed among them and yet Luke is mentioned a couple verses later in verse 14, "Luke, the beloved physician..." Now, that's as far as most people ever go, but there's more. Hold your place and look at Phil 24. Here Paul is writing to Philemon concerning the release of Onesimus, and in verse 24 he sends greetings to Philemon from "Mark, Aristarchus, Demas" and "Luke," calling them "my fellow workers," using the exact same word he used in Col 4:11 where Luke was excluded as being a "fellow worker from among the circumcision." In other words, Col does not include Luke as one of the only fellow workers from among the circumcision, but Phil 24 says that Luke was a fellow worker. Therefore, Luke cannot have been a circumcised Jew. And that would be a very strange and highly unlikely set of circumstances. So it indicates Luke was a Gentile. Second, Acts 1:19 implies that Aramaic was not Luke's language. "And it became known to all who were living in Jerusalem; so that in their own language that field was called Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)" If Luke had been a Jew Aramaic would have very likely been his first language, unless of course, the possibility he was a Hellenistic Jew. But combining this with the fact he was uncircumcised makes it extremely unlikely. The indication is that he was a Gentile. Third, Luke's obvious skill with the Greek language points to him being a Gentile. It is well-known in theology circles that Luke's Greek is pristine and his vocabulary large. These are strong indicators that he was a Gentile. And if he was not a Gentile, but a Hellenistic Jew, then he had a very abnormal proclivity for the Greek language. Fourth, there is no indication in Scripture that all books of the Bible had to be written by Jews. Turn to Rom 3:2. This may surprise you, but I think honesty demands that when we look at the OT, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to prove that Job was a Jew, if indeed it was written by him, which is not certain, but the cultural background of the book is not Hebrew, but Gentile. Romans 3:2 is usually marshalled to prove that all the authors of Scripture were Jews, but it doesn't say that. Paul's argument in Rom 2:17-3:20 is that Jews had advantages over pagan and cultured Gentiles, and therefore, Jews stand even more condemned. One of the advantages the Jews had is explained in 3:1-2, "Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? Great in every respect, first of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God." What does it mean "they were entrusted with the oracles of God?" Interestingly, the Greek word translated "entrusted" is from the verb πιστευω, which is the verb for "believe." But it also refers to entrusting something to someone with complete confidence." What did God entrust to the Jews with complete confidence? The oversight of the preservation of the oracles of God, not the writing of them. If Paul had wanted to say the writing of the oracles of God, he could have easily said that. But he used a verb for entrusting something to someone with complete confidence. What the verse means is that the Jews were given custodianship of the Scriptures, oversight of their proper copying and transmission and preservation. This gave them an advantage over Gentiles who did not have such close and immediate access to the Scriptures. It made them more responsible for their unbelief!

In the end, there is simply no indication in Scripture that a Jew must author every book of Scripture, and all indications of Luke's background are that he was a Gentile; from Antioch of Syria, a physician of a Greek family

and uncircumcised. It seems to me that he was likely a convert in Antioch and became a traveling companion and friend of Paul whom he gleaned much from in his writing of Luke and Acts. Fifth, and finally, the focus of Luke's gospel on the universality of salvation, it's availability to all is strongly Gentile slanted. Who better than for a Gentile to write to a Gentile world. We'll get into this more when we look at the uniquenesses of Luke, but this is why Luke is such a good companion gospel to Matthew. Matthew focuses on the King who is the rightful heir of the Davidic throne and the kingdom offer to Israel, whereas Luke focuses on the Son of Man as the Savior of all mankind as the gospel goes out to Gentiles. When we put these two pictures together, then add the two pictures of Mark and John, only then does the whole picture of all four gospels come together. That's part of why I wanted to study Luke at this time. I'm wanting to put all this together. I'm wanting to see the whole picture. This happens in stages throughout your career as a pastor-teacher. You start seeing the same things on a number of different levels and it's exciting to see all that God is doing with any one event and how it all interrelates.

Now that we've identified Luke as the author and have some background on Luke, when did he write it? Before the writing of the Book of Acts, which is around AD62. Why? Because Acts 1:1 refers to the Gospel of Luke as "the first account I composed." And since the first must precede the second, then Luke had to write his gospel before AD62. A date between AD56 and 61 is reasonable. Yet this is far earlier than most scholars want to admit. Yet, support of this date is that there is no indication that the Temple had been destroyed, which took place in AD70, and it would be strange that such a fact as that was missing if the book was written after that date. So a date of AD59 is probably quite close, and placing that after Matthew and Mark, we have the first three gospels all written in the AD50's.

About AD59, to whom did Luke write to? Who's the audience? The audience is stated explicitly to be "Theophilus." Luke 1:1-4, "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, ²just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, ³it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write *it* out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; ⁴so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught." Now this Theophilus, not much is known about him and there is a lot of speculation. What do we know? First, Theophilus comes from two Greek words, *θεος* – meaning God and *φιλεω* – meaning "love." So the name means "loved of God" or "lover of God." What's unclear is if this is his actual name or a nickname. But the fact it's Greek and the meaning indicate he was probably a Gentile convert who was growing in the faith. Second, the fact that he is called "most excellent" indicates he was of an elevated status. This expression "most excellent" is used in Acts 23:26 and 24:3 of the Roman governor, Felix, and in Acts 26:25 of Festus. It was a title used of Roman rulers or dignitaries. As such, Theophilus was probably someone of high status in the Roman Empire, and thereby, another evidence that he was Gentile. Third, and this is a speculation, but some think he was a patron who sponsored the circulation of Luke-Acts. We don't know if that's the case, but if he was a patron, he was clearly a believer who had means and this does fit

with what we know of him. Finally, because he was a Gentile believer, it makes sense that the slant in this gospel is toward the Gentiles. Again, this is very unlike Matthew, which is heavily slanted to the Jews. But it all comes together in one picture, because there is more than one thing going on at the time of Christ. Yes, the King is offering the kingdom to Israel, but at the same time, in light of the rejection, the Son of Man is providing salvation for the whole world. Luke's slant is toward the universal provision of salvation, and this is seen in that his book is addressed to a Gentile, Theophilus.

What are the sources Luke used? Luke 1:1-4 indicates that Luke used a variety of sources. First unpublished accounts. Notice in Luke 1:1, "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us." This indicates that there were many others before Luke who tried to compile an account of the things that happened. They may never have completed them or made it into Scripture, but Luke could possibly have used these unpublished accounts. Second, eyewitnesses. Notice in verse 2, "just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word." What we glean here is that these sources were eyewitnesses. This is very important since Luke was not an eyewitness, which is another indication that he was not in the land, or he would have at least been an eyewitness to some of these things. But he had access later to eyewitness reports and he used those to compile his gospel. Third, in 1:3 he did his own personal investigations. "it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you..." This careful investigation seems to have involved interviews of key people. Fourth, it is quite apparent that he interviewed Mary, since some of the things he writes could only be known to Mary, things she kept hidden in her heart until revealed to Luke. Fifth, he could have interviewed the 70. The 70 were trained personally by Jesus and sent out. So he may have interviewed some of them. They were eyewitnesses. Sixth, he could have interviewed the other disciples. Peter, James, John, these were others that he seems to have had interaction with at some time. Seventh, he could have interviewed the other women who were close to Christ. Luke mentions many women by name in his book, more than Matthew and Mark combined, so he may have interviewed them as he did Mary. Eighth, Mnason in Acts 21:16, one of the "we" sections of Acts. Luke was with Mnason who was a long standing disciple and he could have gained some information from him. Ninth, Paul, and although we know Paul was not an eyewitness of the things in Luke, he was of many things in Acts, and he certainly confirmed these facts with Paul. Finally, I'd like to suggest that he had access to Matthew and Mark and used them as sources. The early church ordered the four gospels according to the order they believed they were written. The Muratorian Fragment and the Anti-Marcionite Prologue both claim that Luke was the third to write a gospel. The Anti-Marcionite Prologue goes further, saying "He [Luke], when the gospels were already written down, that according to Matthew in Judea, but that according to Mark in Italy, instigated by the holy spirit, in parts of Achaea wrote down this gospel..." That would go against the grain of all modern scholarship. But we go with the Scripture's first, and modern scholarship second. Therefore, Luke may have used many sources, unpublished accounts, personal interviews, and research from Matthew and Mark. But it was all

used under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, so that it is the very word of God, and it gains its authority as apostolic by his association with Paul who must have checked his work for accuracy.

What is the purpose of Luke? Luke 1:3-4 gives the purpose is to write a sequential account. First, to write an exact sequence of events that took place. Luke 1:3, “to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus.” The phrase consecutive order means exact sequence. So his first purpose was to write a record of the exact sequence of everything that happened. Second, so Theophilus would have all the facts straight. Luke 1:4, “so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.” Theophilus had already been taught from oral tradition. But Luke wanted to further his discipleship by giving him an account of the exact truth. Luke is concerned with precision and as a physician he understood the dangers of error. So he investigated everything carefully so he could dispense of the exact truth of what had happened. Those are the two purposes.

What is the message? The message is interesting. Andy Woods says, “The message of Luke is that Christ is the perfectly human and divine savior who, as the rightful heir to Israel’s covenants, was unjustly rejected by the nation. However, this rejection enabled Him to become the universal savior of all people, including those least considered “savable” (19:10). Christ calls those who respond to Him to become His disciples.” So the book’s message is a universal one in light of Israel’s rejection, that the Savior came to die for all nations. And those who respond by faith are to become His followers.

What are some of the uniquenesses of Luke’s gospel? There are many. I’ll only mention a few. First, more than 50% of Luke is unique, whereas 40% of Matthew is unique and only 10% of Mark is unique. That means there is less overlap in the other synoptic gospels with Luke than either of the other two. And since we have already studied Matthew, when we finish Luke, we’ll have taught 90% of the synoptic gospels. The remaining 10% is found in Mark. So, by teaching Matthew and then Luke, it’s the quickest way to get through the bulk of the synoptic gospels. Second, Luke and Acts combined make up more than 28% of the NT. That’s more than all 13 of Paul’s epistles. Luke wrote 2,138 verses and Paul wrote only 2,033. So Luke’s writings comprise more of the NT than Paul’s. But, remember, that Paul oversaw and gave apostolic authority to Luke-Acts, so you may look at Luke-Acts as almost written by Paul since we’re very confident that Luke spent so much time with him that he must have gotten a lot of it from Paul. It’s much like the Gospel of Mark being overseen by Peter, since Mark traveled with Peter and gets his apostolic authority from Peter. Third, only Luke contains information about Jesus’ childhood; the details of His birth, His circumcision at the Temple, the prophecies of Simeon and Anna, his development, the visit to the temple when He was 12 years old. Only Luke records these childhood incidents. Why? People have wondered about Jesus’ childhood for centuries. They’ve made up all kinds of imaginative stories to fill in. But why did Luke emphasize these? Because Luke emphasizes Jesus’ humanity; that He had a real human birth, a real circumcision of real flesh, a real physical, social and mental development. He’s a real human. Luke emphasizes the humanity of Christ, whereas John emphasizes that He is God, Mark that He is a servant and

Matthew that He is a King. Each has their own particular emphasis, and Luke's is Jesus' humanity. Fourth, supporting this, Jesus' genealogy is traced back to Adam, not Abraham. In Matthew the genealogy goes back to Abraham to emphasize that Jesus is a Jew and the heir of the Abrahamic covenant promises. But in Luke He is traced back to Adam. To do what? To connect Him to the human race. He is a genuine human who came and died for the entire human race, a Savior for all mankind, a universal Savior. Fifth, the church owes some of its most precious hymns to Luke's gospel. The *Song of Elizabeth* comes from Luke 1:39-45, *Mary's Magnificat* comes from Luke 1:46-55, *Benedictus* comes from 1:67-79, *Gloria in Excelsis* is rooted in Luke 2:13-14 and *Nunc Dimittis* comes from Luke 2:28-32. So several hymns come from Luke's gospel. Finally, special attention is given to Jesus being the Savior of social outcasts and women. He came to save that which was lost, and that includes those who are outcasts and women. The emphasis on women is very obvious compared to Matthew and Mark. He makes clear that salvation is for all people, it's a universal message, and that there is no difference spiritually between male and female, slave and free, Jew and Gentile. That was not the case in Israel. The divisions in the Temple court are enough to see that there were spiritual differences; they had a court of the Gentiles, a court of Israel and within the court of Israel, a court of the women and a court of the men. It's the same way in Israel today at the Western Wall; there is a section for women and a section for men, and guess which one is closest to the holy of holies? The section for men. But in Christ there is no longer spiritual rank; there is Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female in Christ. That is a strong emphasis in Luke. And I hope you have as much fun with it as I will.

Alright, we have covered the introduction and background of Luke's gospel. This involved our approach, the grammatical-historical-contextual approach; the author, who is by tradition and text identified as Luke; the background of Luke, which indicates he is a Gentile; the date of composition, around AD59, third in the order after Matthew and Mark; the audience, a Gentile believer of high status known as Theophilus; the sources Luke used, involving many unpublished works, personal interviews and investigation of Matthew and Mark; the purpose, which is to give an exact sequence of events for the benefit of Theophilus; the message, which relates to Jesus as the Christ who is a true human-divine savior, rejected by Israel but resulting in the gospel going out to all nations. Those who respond become His disciples; and lastly, some of the uniquenesses, this book holds a large place in the canon of Scripture and should be studied to help complete our picture of the four gospels.

¹ Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1983), 327.

² F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*, 159.

³ F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*, 161.

⁴ Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1983), 327.