

# I. LUKE-ACTS

## Introduction

- the third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles form a two-volume work of Luke
- Luke- Acts occupies fully one quarter of the NT writings.
- Together they account for 27.5% of the New Testament, the largest contribution by a single author
- the separation of the volumes occurred around AD 150
- The stylistic, structural and the thematic elements of these two writings demonstrate that the same literary imagination was at work in both.

## 1. The Message of Luke-Acts

- The first part, Gospel of Luke, tells how God fulfilled his plan for the world's salvation through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the promised Messiah.
- Acts continues the story of Christianity in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, beginning with Jesus' Ascension to Heaven.
- Luke-Acts is an attempt to answer a theological problem, namely how the Messiah of the Jews came to have an overwhelmingly non-Jewish church
- The central theme of Luke-Acts is that the message of Christ was sent to the Gentiles because the Jews rejected it.

## 2. Luke-Acts forms a general history of Christianity

- an attempt to write a general history of Christianity
- The gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles describe the life and activities of Jesus and the first Christians as well.

## 3. The second volume is a continuation and confirmation of the first volume

- Luke wrote the Acts of the Apostles as a continuation of his first volume, i.e. the third Gospel.
- These two volumes have *one single story* the story of "Christian beginnings".
- Luke tells "the story of Jesus" as well as "the story of the early church"
- Luke-Acts reveals Luke's synthetic narrative imagination by which he makes the story of Jesus and the story of the church's beginnings into a coherent and interconnected story.

## 4. Luke-Acts is attributed to the authorship of Luke

- The Muratorian canon (c. 170), Irenaeus (130-c.200), Tertullian (c. 160-225), the Anti-Marcion Prologue (2nd century), and the Monarchian Prologue (2nd or 3<sup>rd</sup> Century) bear witness to the Lukan authorship.
- The oldest manuscript of Luke, the Bodmer Papyrus XIV (p75), dated about 175-225, attributes the gospel of Luke to Luke, using the title "The Gospel according to Luke."

## 5. The Purpose of the Author

- Together they form a comprehensive study on the beginnings of Christianity.
- to make the Christians know that their faith was not a matter of groundless speculation and incredulity
- it was based on the evidence of eyewitnesses and servants of the gospel
- Luke-Acts is essential both for the history of the earliest Christianity and for the development of its theology.

## **6. The Author and his background**

- Luke belonged to a Greek gentile family (cfr. Col 4:11) His home town was Antioch in Syria.
- his name is Gentile—Lucanus, and shortened to Lucas or Luke.
- Luke was a proselyte (= one who has recently converted) to Judaism before his conversion to Christianity
- there are three references to him by Paul in his epistles
- “Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you”*(Colossians 4:14). This reference indicates Luke’s profession
- Luke’s writings show that he is a man of culture, of careful and diligent intelligence and of a very tender and sympathetic heart.
- Not only he ministers to a weak and sickly body, but he knows also the remedy for a sin–sick soul.
- Town of Antioch was one of the first great Christian centers outside Palestine and it became the center of progressive theology which insisted that the Law of Moses need not be followed by non-Jewish Christian (Gal 2: 11-21).
- It was during this period and in this dynamic church community that Luke was converted.
- his great missionary zeal was kindled by contact with apostolic men, such as Peter, Paul, and Barnabas.
- his literary fluency is demonstrated by his easy use of several Greek idiomatic expressions.
- his wide reading in Torah is manifested by his solid scriptural allusions and by the very structure of the narrative.
- his storytelling ability is revealed in his many striking parables in a series.
- Luke's ministry in Philippi was most probably in between 50-57 A.D (Cf. Acts 16: 11-15)
- Luke visited the communities at Troas, Miletus and Ephesus, Tyre and Caesarea (Acts 20: 5-21) with Paul on their way to Jerusalem.
- Luke arrived in Rome in 61 AD with Paul (Acts 28:16-30).

## **7. The place and community**

- Luke’s readers were mainly Greek-speaking Gentile Christians although there might have been Jewish members among his readers.
- His readers were sufficiently acquainted with scriptural traditions to grasp at least the gist of his many allusions.
- It is generally accepted that Luke wrote his work in order to strengthen the faith of the members of his community at a time of crisis due to persecution.

-Modern opinion is that Luke-Acts was addressed to a largely Gentile Christians directly or indirectly evangelized by the Pauline mission.

-Some experts date the composition of the combined work to around 80–90 AD, although some others suggest 90–110.

-According to the early tradition, Luke-Acts was written in Antioch.

## **8. Literary Genre**

-Luke's literary style is the story.

-He is, simply, a gifted storyteller and his composition is filled with short, sharply defined passages

-the parables of the rich fool (12:16-21), of Lazarus and Rich man (16:19-31), of the Good Samaritan (10:30-35) and the most memorable parable of the Loving Father (15: 11-32) are found only in Luke's gospel.

-In Acts, there are also the wonderful stories of Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11), Simon Magus (8:9-24), Peter's release from prison (12: 6-17), and Paul's shipwreck (27: 1-44), each of them small masterpieces of narration.

-He makes use of these short stories into a single narrative and communicates an impressive sense of historical movement of the fulfillment of the History of salvation.

-Luke's original contribution to Christian literature was connecting the events of the early church to those of Jesus' ministry.

-No Christology of Acts is possible without Luke's portrayal of Jesus in his Gospel.

-Luke-Acts clearly manifest Hellenistic (Greek) literary style.

-Luke places the story of Jesus and the Church in the context of world history. He connects it not only to the story of Israel (1:5), but also to the larger Roman Empire,

-His narrative is essentially linear, moving the reader from one event to another.

## **10. The Unity of Luke-Acts**

### **10.1 the story of the earthly Jesus and the activity of the risen Lord Jesus**

-His innovation is to show that the gospel-story is incomplete without the church-story.

-Luke emphasizes that the character of Christian life in the church cannot be understood apart from its foundation in the incarnation, mission, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

### **10.2 The ascension of Jesus**

-The ascension is the major bridge from volume one to volume two. It is the necessary climax of the one (Lk 24: 50-53) and starting-point of the other (Acts 1:9-11).

-The chief destiny of the earthly Jesus is to ascend to the right hand of the father (9:51; 22: 69).

### **10.3 Holy Spirit**

-The Spirit promised at the end of the Gospel has been given in its fullness to his disciples in the beginning of the Acts on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4).

-Jesus works in the spirit (Lk 4:14-18) so also Apostles work with the power of the Spirit (Acts 4: 8; 8:29).

## **10.4 Jerusalem**

- Another significant bridge between the two volumes is the function of Jerusalem as a sort of geographical sign-post (Lk 24:53).
- the entire movement of Luke's gospel is toward Jerusalem, the geographical movement in Acts is away from Jerusalem.
- Luke makes two important theological conclusions: the first is the extension of Jesus' journey from Galilee to Jerusalem (Lk 9:51-19:40) which emphasizes Jerusalem as the goal of his mission.
- The second is the command of Jesus to the disciples not to leave Jerusalem after his resurrection.
- Jerusalem becomes the dramatic goal of volume one and the starting point of volume two (Acts 1:8).

## **10.5 Rejection**

- Jesus is rejected by his people (Lk 4:30). The Apostles also underwent the same experience of rejection (Acts 7:58; 13:50).

## **10.6 Salvation moves from Jewish to Gentiles**

- The history of salvation centered on the people of Israel and Jerusalem is slowly but gradually moving toward the Gentiles and Rome towards the end of the second volume.

## **10.7 Conversion is a major theme in Luke-Acts**

- Jesus' public ministry is followed by John the Baptist's call for repentance (Lk 3: 7-14) and Acts opens with Peter's preaching for repentance.
- repentance, which leads to conversion, is a major theme of Luke in his both volumes.

## **10.8 Theophilus**

Each volume is introduced by a prologue addressed to the same person, Theophilus, a Christian who must have sponsored this project.

- The prologue to Acts (Acts 1: 1-2) is a brief summary of the first volume.
- The Gospel prologue is more elaborate and provides important clues to the author's purposes in writing (Luke 1: 1-4).

## **11. Narrative Devices in Luke-Acts**

Luke's narratives in both volumes are in the form of summaries, Speeches, journeys and parallelism.

### **11.1 Summaries**

- summaries take details of specific stories and generalize them, giving the reader an impression that it is a customary occurrence.
- In his gospel, Luke uses summaries such as (e.g. Lk 1:80; 2:52; 4: 14-15; 7:21-22; 8:1-3; 13: 22; 19;47; 21;37).
- In the first chapters of Acts, there are three "major summaries" (2: 42-47; 4:32-35;5:12-16).
- In the later sections of Acts, Luke again uses smaller summary statements to advance his narrative (5:42; 6:7; 9:31; 12; 24; 19:20).

### **11.2 Speeches**

-It is a more important device than summaries. In the first eight chapters of Acts, there are nine speeches of greater or lesser length (Acts 1:4-8; 16:22-23; 2:14-36; 3:12-26; 4:8-12; 24:10-21; 6:2-4; 7:2-53).

-As a narrative device, the speech also *interprets* the story for the reader.

### 11.3 Journey

-The central portion of the Gospel is taken up entirely by a great "**travel narrative**" that extends from chapters 9 to 19.

-The Gospel opens and ends with journey - Journey of Mary to the house of Elizabeth (1:26-56) and the Journey of two disciples of Emmaus (24:13-35).

-His treatment of Paul is dominated by a series of journeys, climaxing with the long sea voyage to Rome (Acts 27: 1-44 cf. Acts 13:4-14; 15:36-18:1; **18:18-19:1**).

### 11.4 Parallelism

-Luke makes extensive use of *parallelism* in his story.

-Mary is overshadowed by the Holy Spirit in Luke 1:34-35, for example, so are Mary and the disciples overshadowed by the Holy Spirit at the beginning of Acts (1:13-14; 2:1-4).

-Peter and Paul perform the similar miracles (Act 3: 1-10 and 14: 8-11; 9: 36-40 and 20: 1-4) and which in turn mirror those miracles done by Jesus (Lk 5:17-26; 8:40-56).

-Peter and Paul face similar threats (Acts 12: 6-17 and 16: 25-34) as Jesus faced.

### 11.5 Geography

-The center of his story is the city of Jerusalem and the events that take place there.

-The Lucan Gospel begins and ends in Jerusalem: after the prologue, the first scene is that of Zechariah offering incense in the Jerusalem temple, and at the end Luke tells how the eleven and the other returned to Jerusalem from Bethany to spend their time in the Temple (24:53).

-An important part of the geographical perspective is the so-called travel account (9:51-19:27) whose destiny is Jerusalem: (cf.9:51).

-In Acts, the geographical movements are away from Jerusalem.

-The ministry in Jerusalem (Acts 1-7) is followed by the evangelization of Judea and Samaria (8-12), the Asia Minor and Europe, ending in Rome (13-28).

-Each outward movement, however, also circles back to Jerusalem (Acts 12:25; 15:2; 18:22; 19:21; 20:16; 21:13; 25:1).

## 12. Luke-Acts sources

### 12.1 Use of Mark:

-LK tends to follow the order of Mark's narrative rather closely.

-Luke's use of Mark suggests a far deeper level of agreement than of disagreement.

-Nevertheless, Luke consistently amends mark in the direction of correctness, clarity, and consecutiveness.

-Mark would introduce a character or an action without prior warning. Luke improves Mark by inserting it

earlier in the story as a proper preparation for a later development.

## 12.2 Luke-Acts imitates OT biblical models

-It is interesting to note that in his narrative Luke imitates the Greek of the Septuagint.

-Luke uses biblical diction in various ways.

-In the Stephen speech (Acts 7:2-53) he extracts and fits together pieces from a very long section of Torah so artfully that the result appears both as a continuous and spontaneous speech by Stephen.

In both volumes, Luke seems to depend on the imitation of OT biblical models:

LK magnificat	1 Sam 2:1-10, song of Hannah
Lk 7: 1-16 (Centurion's slave)	2 Kings 5: 1-14; 1 Kings 17: 17-24
Lk 9: 54 (Fire from heaven)	2 Kings 1: 9-16
Lk 9: 61 (Bidding farewell)	1 Kings 19: 20
Lk 24: 51-53; Acts 1: 9-11; 2: 1-13 (Ascension)	2 Kings 2: 1-14
Acts 5: 1-11 (Death of Ananias and Sapphira)	Stoning of Achan (Josh 7: 1-26)

-Among the NT writers, Luke is the one who has made use of OT frequently in communicating his message of faith in the pattern of Prophecy and fulfillment.

-He tries to demonstrate that Jesus Christ is the definitive revelation of God the Father and the mission of salvation continues through the disciples.

## 13. Luke-Acts: a Christian Apologetic Literature

-Luke-Acts is considered the first Christian apologetic literature. According to some scholars, Luke wrote an apology for the Christian movement as a whole (cf. Acts 18: 14-15) whereas some others say that Luke wrote an apology for the empire to encourage a politically cooperative attitude among the politically restive (agitated) fellow Christians.

-Still for others, Luke-Acts is an apology for Paul and his teachings because Luke presents Paul as a true teacher of Israel and not as one opposed to Torah.

The double function of Luke-Acts was to interpret the gospel within the Jewish-Hellenistic Christian context and to present Christianity to an outsider as enlightened, harmless and beneficent.

-The theory of a political apology in Luke-Acts rests on two contentions: first, that Luke emphasizes the political innocence of the Christians, from Jesus himself onwards; second, that Luke always portrays Roman officials in a favorable light, or as friendly to the Christians (and thus indirectly urges the officials of his own day to follow the example of their predecessors).

