

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

LUKE

THEME

Author

The third Gospel does not name its author. This is also true of the book of Acts, the author's second work. This does not mean, however, that the original readers did not know who wrote these two books.

The Lukan authorship of Luke–Acts is affirmed by both external evidence (church tradition) and internal evidence. Church tradition supporting Luke as the author is both early (from the mid-2nd century A.D.) and unanimous (it was never doubted until the 19th century). The “we” sections of Acts ([16:10–17](#); [20:5–21:18](#); [27:1–28:16](#)) assume that the author was a companion of Paul and participated in the events described in those sections. Thus the author of Acts was probably one of Paul's companions listed in his letters written during those periods (Luke is listed in [Col. 4:14](#); [2 Tim. 4:11](#); [Philem. 24](#)) and not one of those referred to in the third person in the “we” sections (cf. [Acts 20:4–5](#)). It is known that the author was from the second generation of the early church, was not an “eyewitness” of Jesus' ministry ([Luke 1:2](#)), and was a Gentile (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.4.6, says Luke was “by race an Antiochian and a physician by profession”; cf. [Col. 4:14](#)). All of this confirms the tradition that Luke was the author of the third Gospel. Because Luke traveled with Paul, this Gospel was received as having apostolic endorsement and authority from Paul and as a trustworthy record of the gospel that Paul preached (Eusebius reports that Paul quoted from Luke by saying, “According to my Gospel” [*Ecclesiastical History* 3.4.8]).

Date

The earliest possible date of Luke–Acts is immediately after the events that Luke recorded in [Acts 28](#), c. A.D. 62. In fact, Luke could have been written slightly earlier, and Acts could have been completed at that time. The specific date centers on two questions: would Luke have added to his Gospel later, and did he make use of the Gospel of Mark in writing his own Gospel? If Luke wrote Luke–Acts after the martyrdom of Paul (c. A.D. 64–67), some have suggested that the omission of the details of Paul's trial and death seems strange (see [Introduction to Acts: Date](#)). In

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addition, Luke makes no mention of the terrible persecution under Nero in A.D. 65 but gives a very positive picture of Paul preaching the gospel in Rome for two years “with all boldness and without hindrance” ([Acts 28:31](#)), so he must have written sometime before 65. (Those who hold to a later date for Luke reply that ending with Paul preaching in Rome is natural, because it shows that the preaching “to the end of the earth” in [Acts 1:8](#) has been fulfilled. Since a primary purpose of Luke–Acts is to tell the story of how the gospel spread to the Gentile capital of Rome, when that purpose is accomplished the story could come to a natural end, regardless of what happens to Paul.)

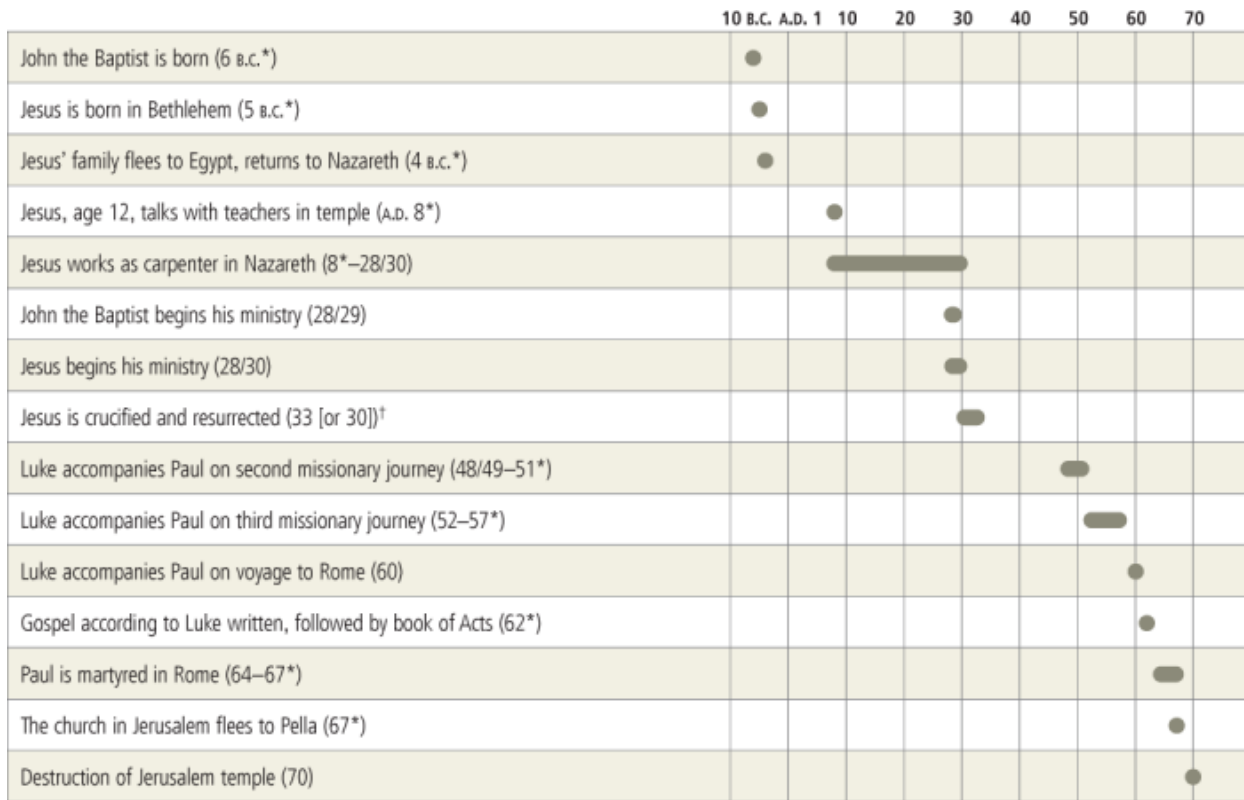
Concerning the relationship of Luke to Mark, the great majority of scholars believe that Luke made use of Mark in writing his Gospel. There is no real difficulty in dating Mark in the mid- to late-50s A.D. (see [Introduction to Mark: Date and Location](#)), which would allow for a date of Luke in the early 60s. Other scholars dispute this and claim that the predictions of the fall of Jerusalem in [Luke 21:20–24](#) are so vivid that they could have been written only after the fact, which means that Luke and Acts were written after A.D. 70. These scholars would then date Mark somewhat before Luke, in the late 60s (after Peter’s death). However, many evangelical scholars, who consider [Luke 21:20–24](#) a predictive prophecy by Jesus, would hold to a date for Luke in the early 60s.

Theme

Luke wrote his Gospel so that his readers would understand that the gospel is for all, both Jews and Gentiles alike, since Jesus is the promised one of God as prophesied in the OT and as attested through God’s saving activity in Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. In addition to this, Luke emphasized the truthfulness of the Christian traditions his readers had been taught, so that by believing in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, they would receive the promised Holy Spirit whom he gives to all who follow him.

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Timeline



* denotes approximate date; / signifies either/or; † see *The Date of Jesus' Crucifixion*, pp. 1809–1810

Purpose, Occasion, and Background

Both Luke ([1:3](#)) and Acts ([1:1](#)) are addressed to “Theophilus,” and there is no reason to deny that he was a real person, although attempts to identify him have been unsuccessful. Luke uses the same description “most excellent” ([Luke 1:3](#)) in the book of Acts to describe the Roman governors Felix ([Acts 23:26; 24:2](#)) and Festus ([Acts 26:25](#)). Theophilus was probably a man of wealth and social standing, and “most excellent” served as a respectful form of address.

Luke’s broader intended audience consisted primarily of Gentile Christians like Theophilus who had already “been taught” ([1:4](#)) about Jesus. But Luke no doubt realized that his recounting of Jesus’ life and message would also be useful for evangelism among non-Christians. Luke probably had several goals in writing:

1. *To assure his readers of the certainty of what they had been taught.* This is accomplished by demonstrating his credentials as a historian (cf. [1:1–4](#), where Luke speaks of having “followed all things closely for some time past” in order “to write an orderly

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account”). He also mentions that the material he is sharing is well known ([24:18](#); [Acts 26:26](#)). The fact that the material in Luke comes from eyewitness testimony ([Luke 1:2](#); [24:48](#); cf. [Acts 1:8](#)) further assures his readers that what they were taught is certain. Luke also seeks to assure his readers by demonstrating that the events recorded in Luke–Acts were the fulfillment of ancient prophecy (e.g., [Luke 1:1](#); [3:4–6](#); [4:17–21](#); [7:22–23](#)) and the fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecies (e.g., [9:22](#), [44](#); [11:29–30](#); [13:32–34](#); [17:25](#); [18:31–33](#)).

2. *To help his readers understand how Israel’s rejection of Jesus and the Gentiles’ entrance into the kingdom of God are in accord with the divine plan.* Luke emphasizes that Christianity is not a new religion but rather the fulfillment and present-day expression of the religion of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

3. *To clarify for his readers Jesus’ teaching concerning the end times* by showing that Jesus did not teach that the *parousia* (return of Christ) would come immediately but that there would be a period between his resurrection and his return ([9:27](#); [19:11](#); [21:20–24](#); [22:69](#); [Acts 1:6–9](#)). Nevertheless, Jesus would return ([Luke 3:9](#), [17](#); [12:38–48](#); [18:8](#); [21:32](#)) in bodily form ([Acts 1:11](#)), and believers should live in watchful expectation ([Luke 21:34–36](#)).

4. *To emphasize that his readers need not fear Rome.* Luke hints at this theme by highlighting Herod’s and Pilate’s desire to release Jesus and the Roman centurion’s recognition of his innocence. Luke also records (in Acts) several occasions where Roman authorities came to Paul’s rescue. When Roman officials *did* persecute, Luke explains that it was due to error and that the persecution ceased immediately when the error was discovered (cf. [Acts 16:22–39](#)).

History of Salvation Summary

Jesus comes as the messianic King to deliver the poor and needy and downcast ([4:18–19](#)). He fulfills the whole OT ([24:44–47](#)), especially its promises of everlasting salvation. The fulfillment of his mission comes with his crucifixion and resurrection. (For an explanation of the “History of Salvation,” see [Overview of the Bible](#).)

Literary Features

The narrative of Luke as a whole follows the chronology of Christ’s life and death. No Gospel encompasses such a complete range of subgenres as Luke: annunciation stories, birth narratives, lyric praise psalms, Christmas carols, prophecies, genealogies, preparation stories, temptation stories, calling stories, recognition stories, conflict stories, encounter stories, miracle stories, pronouncement stories,

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parables, beatitudes, sermons, proverbs, passion stories, trial narratives, and resurrection accounts. Stylistically, Luke is known for his vivid descriptive details and ability to make scenes come alive in the imagination.

The Gospel of Luke finds its fundamental unity in the person of Jesus Christ and in his mission to seek and to save the lost. From the first announcement of his coming to his ascension into heaven, Jesus is at the center of everything: the songs are for his praise, the miracles are by his power, the teaching is from his wisdom, the conflict is over his claims, and the cross is that which only he could bear. Luke gives his account further literary unity by intertwining the stories of Jesus and John the Baptist; by beginning and ending his story at the temple; by presenting the life of Jesus as a journey toward Jerusalem; and by following the progress of the disciples as they learn to count the cost of discipleship. The unity of the Gospel is also expressed in Jesus' pronouncement to Zacchaeus: "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" ([19:10](#)).

Key Themes

1. <i>God's sovereign rule over history.</i> The promises God made through the prophets are already being fulfilled.	13:33 ; 22:22, 42 ; Acts 1:16–17 ; 2:23 ; 4:28 ; etc.
2. <i>The arrival and actual presence of the kingdom of God.</i> Nevertheless, the consummation of the kingdom is still a future event, a blessed hope for which the church prays.	11:2, 20 ; 16:16 ; 17:20–21 ; 18:1–8 ; 21:27–28, 34–36 ; cf. Acts 1:11 ; 1 Cor. 16:22 ; Rev. 22:20
3. <i>The coming and indwelling of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus and his followers.</i> The Spirit is present in the Gospel of Luke, from the births of John the Baptist and Jesus to the end. The Spirit is present at Jesus' dedication in the temple, his baptism, temptation, early ministry, and first sermon. The Holy Spirit is central to the message of John the Baptist, and Jesus at his ascension promises the Spirit's future coming in power.	1:15–17, 35 ; 2:25–27 ; 3:16, 22 ; 4:1, 14, 18 ; 5:17 ; 24:49
4. <i>The great reversal taking place in the world,</i> in which the first are becoming last and the last are becoming first, the proud are being brought low and the humble are being exalted. Luke places great emphasis on God's love for the poor, tax collectors, outcasts, sinners, women, Samaritans, and Gentiles. In keeping with this concern,	1:48, 52–53 ; 6:20–26 ; 13:30 ; 14:11 ; 18:14

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many of the episodes that appear only in Luke's Gospel feature the welcome of an outcast (the Christmas shepherds, the Prodigal Son, the persistent widow, Zacchaeus, etc.).	
5. <i>Believers are to live a life of prayer and practice good stewardship with their possessions.</i> In Luke's narrative, prayer occurs at every major point in Jesus' life: at his baptism; at his selection of the Twelve; at Peter's confession; at Jesus' transfiguration; in his teaching the Lord's Prayer; before Peter's denial; etc.	3:21 ; 6:12 ; 9:18, 28-29 ; 11:1-4 ; 12:33-34 ; 16:9 ; 18:1 ; 22:32, 40, 46
6. <i>The danger of riches</i> is constantly emphasized in Luke, for the love of riches chokes out the seed of the gospel and keeps it from becoming fruitful. This danger is so great that Jesus often warns his readers not to set their hearts upon riches and to give generously to the poor. The woes pronounced upon haughty rich people stand in sharp contrast to the blessings pronounced upon the humble poor.	6:20-26 ; 8:14 ; 12:13-21 ; 16:10-13, 19-31 ; 18:22 (cf. 5:11 ; 14:33 ; Acts 2:44-45 ; 4:32); Luke 21:3-4

The Setting of Luke

The events in the book of Luke take place almost entirely within the vicinity of Palestine, an area extending roughly from Caesarea Philippi in the north to Beersheba in the south. During this time it was ruled by the Roman Empire. The opening chapters describe events surrounding Jesus' birth in Judea, where Herod had been appointed king by the Romans. The closing chapters end with Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension during the rule of Pontius Pilate and the tetrarchs Antipas and Philip.

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Outline

- I. The Prologue ([1:1-4](#))
- II. The Infancy Narrative ([1:5-2:52](#))
 - A. The birth of John the Baptist foretold ([1:5-25](#))

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- B. The birth of Jesus foretold ([1:26-38](#))
 - C. Mary visits Elizabeth ([1:39-56](#))
 - D. The birth of John the Baptist ([1:57-80](#))
 - E. The birth of Jesus Christ ([2:1-52](#))
 - 1. Jesus is born ([2:1-20](#))
 - 2. Jesus presented in the temple ([2:21-40](#))
 - 3. The boy Jesus in the temple ([2:41-52](#))
- III. Preparation for the Ministry of Jesus ([3:1-4:15](#))
- A. John the Baptist prepares the way ([3:1-20](#))
 - B. Jesus' baptism, genealogy, and temptation ([3:21-4:15](#))
 - 1. Jesus' baptism ([3:21-22](#))
 - 2. The genealogy of Jesus Christ ([3:23-38](#))
 - 3. The temptation of Jesus ([4:1-15](#))
- IV. The Ministry of Jesus in Galilee ([4:16-9:50](#))
- A. The beginning ([4:16-5:16](#))
 - 1. Jesus rejected at Nazareth ([4:16-30](#))
 - 2. Jesus begins his healing ministry ([4:31-41](#))
 - 3. Jesus preaches in synagogues ([4:42-44](#))
 - 4. Jesus calls the first disciples ([5:1-11](#))
 - 5. Jesus cleanses a leper ([5:12-16](#))
 - B. The beginning of controversy ([5:17-6:11](#))
 - 1. Jesus heals a paralytic ([5:17-26](#))
 - 2. Jesus calls Levi ([5:27-32](#))
 - 3. A question about fasting ([5:33-39](#))
 - 4. Jesus is lord of the Sabbath ([6:1-5](#))
 - 5. A man with a withered hand ([6:6-11](#))
 - C. Jesus teaches the disciples ([6:12-49](#))
 - 1. Jesus appoints twelve apostles ([6:12-16](#))
 - 2. Jesus ministers to a great multitude ([6:17-19](#))

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3. The Beatitudes ([6:20–23](#))
 4. Jesus pronounces woes ([6:24–26](#))
 5. Love your enemies ([6:27–36](#))
 6. Judging others ([6:37–42](#))
 7. A tree and its fruit ([6:43–45](#))
 8. Build your house on the rock ([6:46–49](#))
- D. Who is this Jesus? ([7:1–50](#))
1. Jesus heals a centurion's servant ([7:1–10](#))
 2. Jesus raises a widow's son ([7:11–17](#))
 3. Messengers from John the Baptist ([7:18–35](#))
 4. A sinful woman forgiven ([7:36–50](#))
- E. Jesus teaches in parables ([8:1–21](#))
1. Women accompanying Jesus ([8:1–3](#))
 2. The parable of the sower ([8:4–8](#))
 3. The purpose of the parables ([8:9–15](#))
 4. A lamp under a jar ([8:16–18](#))
 5. Jesus' mother and brothers ([8:19–21](#))
- F. Jesus, Lord of nature, demons, disease, and death ([8:22–56](#))
1. Jesus calms a storm ([8:22–25](#))
 2. Jesus heals a demon-possessed man ([8:26–39](#))
 3. Jesus heals a woman and Jairus's daughter ([8:40–56](#))
- G. Jesus and the Twelve ([9:1–50](#))
1. Jesus sends out the Twelve ([9:1–6](#))
 2. Herod Antipas is perplexed by Jesus ([9:7–9](#))
 3. Jesus feeds the 5,000 ([9:10–17](#))
 4. Peter confesses Jesus as the Christ ([9:18–20](#))
 5. Jesus foretells his death ([9:21–22](#))
 6. Jesus teaches the disciples ([9:23–27](#))
 7. The transfiguration ([9:28–36](#))

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8. The healing of a boy with an unclean spirit ([9:37–43a](#))
 9. Jesus again foretells his death ([9:43b–45](#))
 10. Who is the greatest? ([9:46–48](#))
 11. Anyone not against us is for us ([9:49–50](#))
- V. The Journey to Jerusalem ([9:51–19:27](#))
- A. The first mention of the journey to Jerusalem ([9:51–13:21](#))
 1. The mission to Samaria ([9:51–56](#))
 2. The cost of following Jesus ([9:57–62](#))
 3. The mission of the seventy-two ([10:1–24](#))
 4. The parable of the good Samaritan ([10:25–37](#))
 5. Martha and Mary ([10:38–42](#))
 6. The Lord’s Prayer ([11:1–13](#))
 7. Jesus and Beelzebul ([11:14–23](#))
 8. The return of an unclean spirit ([11:24–26](#))
 9. Various warnings and teachings ([11:27–13:9](#))
 10. Jesus heals on the Sabbath ([13:10–17](#))
 11. The parables of the mustard seed and the leaven ([13:18–21](#))
 - B. The second mention of the journey to Jerusalem ([13:22–17:10](#))
 1. The narrow door ([13:22–30](#))
 2. Lament over Jerusalem ([13:31–35](#))
 3. The healing of a man on the Sabbath ([14:1–6](#))
 4. Various teachings and parables ([14:7–17:10](#))
 - C. The third mention of the journey to Jerusalem ([17:11–19:27](#))
 1. Jesus cleanses ten lepers ([17:11–19](#))
 2. The coming of the kingdom ([17:20–37](#))
 3. The parable of the persistent widow ([18:1–8](#))
 4. The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector ([18:9–14](#))
 5. Jesus blesses the children ([18:15–17](#))
 6. The rich ruler ([18:18–30](#))

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7. Jesus foretells his death a third time ([18:31-34](#))
 8. Jesus heals a blind beggar ([18:35-43](#))
 9. Jesus and Zacchaeus ([19:1-10](#))
 10. The parable of the ten minas ([19:11-27](#))
- VI. The Ministry of Jesus in Jerusalem ([19:28-21:38](#))
- A. The Triumphal Entry ([19:28-40](#))
 - B. Jesus weeps over Jerusalem ([19:41-44](#))
 - C. Jesus cleanses the temple ([19:45-48](#))
 - D. The authority of Jesus challenged ([20:1-8](#))
 - E. The parable of the wicked tenants ([20:9-18](#))
 - F. Paying taxes to Caesar ([20:19-26](#))
 - G. Sadducees ask about the resurrection ([20:27-40](#))
 - H. Whose son is the Christ? ([20:41-44](#))
 - I. Beware of the scribes ([20:45-47](#))
 - J. The widow's offering ([21:1-4](#))
 - K. Jesus foretells the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem ([21:5-24](#))
 1. Jesus foretells the destruction of the temple ([21:5-6](#))
 2. Signs before the destruction ([21:7-9](#))
 3. Nation will rise against nation ([21:10-19](#))
 4. Jesus foretells the destruction of Jerusalem ([21:20-24](#))
 - L. Jesus foretells the coming of the Son of Man ([21:25-38](#))
 1. The coming of the Son of Man ([21:25-28](#))
 2. The lesson of the fig tree ([21:29-33](#))
 3. Watch yourselves ([21:34-38](#))
- VII. The Suffering and Death of Jesus ([22:1-23:56](#))
- A. The plot to kill Jesus and the Passover meal ([22:1-38](#))
 1. The plot to kill Jesus ([22:1-6](#))
 2. Preparations for the Passover meal ([22:7-13](#))

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3. The Passover meal and the institution of the Lord's Supper ([22:14–23](#))
 4. Who is the greatest? ([22:24–30](#))
 5. Jesus foretells Peter's denial ([22:31–34](#))
 6. Scripture must be fulfilled in Jesus ([22:35–38](#))
- B. The arrest and trial ([22:39–23:56](#))
1. Jesus prays on the Mount of Olives ([22:39–46](#))
 2. The betrayal and arrest of Jesus ([22:47–53](#))
 3. Peter denies Jesus ([22:54–62](#))
 4. Jesus is mocked ([22:63–65](#))
 5. Jesus before the council ([22:66–71](#))
 6. Jesus before Pilate ([23:1–5](#))
 7. Jesus before Herod Antipas ([23:6–16](#))
 8. Pilate delivers Jesus to be crucified ([23:18–25](#))
 9. The crucifixion ([23:26–43](#))
 10. The death of Jesus ([23:44–49](#))
 11. Jesus is buried ([23:50–56](#))
- VIII. The Resurrection of Jesus ([24:1–53](#))
- A. The empty tomb ([24:1–12](#))
 - B. Jesus' appearance on the road to Emmaus ([24:13–35](#))
 - C. Jesus appears to his disciples ([24:36–49](#))
 - D. The ascension of Jesus ([24:50–53](#))¹

¹ Crossway Bibles. (2008). *The ESV Study Bible* (pp. 1935-1941). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.