

# **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

There is only one Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. There are four inspired versions of the one Gospel: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. It reveals the good news of the love of God in Christ that saves humanity.



**GOSPEL** The word "gospel" means "good news". It is derived from the Greek word, "*euangelion*" (*eu* - "good" and *angelion*- "news or message." The word "evangelist" is derived from the same root. It is also, related to the word for angel, "messenger."

The Gospel according to Luke is the first part of a two-volume work. The second volume is the Acts of the Apostles. Together the two volumes present the biblical history of God's saving work. It is a mission to all humanity through the person of Jesus Christ and how the early Church continues it. The stated purpose of the two volumes is to provide Theophilus and all others who wish to know Jesus that the mission of Apostles is solidly grounded in the life and mission of Jesus. Luke's missionary presentation in the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles begins with the announcement of Jesus' birth and ends with the ministry of St. Paul to the Gentiles.

Luke shows that the chosen followers of Jesus have been prepared and commissioned to be witnesses to his death and resurrection. His followers continue Jesus' mission to the world. The reason that the Church exists is to participate in his mission.



Luke masterfully connects the ministry of Jesus with that of the apostles and the early Church. As Jesus preached and taught - so do the apostles. As Jesus confronted the Pharisees - so do the apostles. As Jesus healed - so do the apostles. As Jesus was empowered by the Holy Spirit - so are the apostles. As Jesus sought out poor and marginalized - so do the apostles. As Jesus opened the Kingdom of God to all, men and women, Jews and Gentiles - so do the apostles. As Jesus was persecuted and martyred - so are the apostles. This continuity of the ministry of Jesus with the ministry of the apostles is Luke's way of guaranteeing the fidelity of the Church's mission to Jesus' life and mission.

By writing both the Gospel and the Acts, Luke shows how God's promises to Israel have been fulfilled in Jesus. Then it shows how they are extended to the whole world by his followers. Likewise, Luke's writings show how the message of Jesus, which is deeply rooted in Jewish aspirations and culture, is adapted to new cultures, new ages and new needs. He takes the message of Jesus and brings it to birth in a new way for peoples

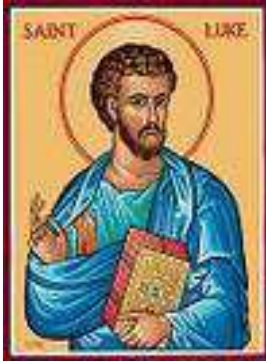
Jesus never reached in his earthly ministry.

Luke's writings are a model and a challenge for the Church of every generation. They guided St. Francis of Assisi, St. Ignatius Loyola, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Pope John Paul II, Father Thomas Judge.

How do we participate in the mission of Jesus and make it meaningful to our world?



## THE AUTHOR:



Early Christian tradition, from the late second century, identifies the author of the Gospel and Acts of the Apostles as Luke, a Syrian from Antioch. He is mentioned as St. Paul's "beloved physician" (Colossians 4:14). He traveled with Paul on the apostle's second missionary journey. The travels with Paul gave Luke the opportunity to meet many of Jesus' original disciples and eyewitnesses. The prologue of his gospel makes it clear that Luke is not part of the first generation of Christian disciples. He is dependent upon the traditions he received from eyewitnesses and draws upon Mark's Gospel.

## THE AUDIENCE:

Luke was Greek speaking who wrote for a non-Palestinian audience who were Gentile Christians. The book is addressed to "**Theophilus**" which means "lover or friend of God." Luke may have made up the name to symbolize all those who seek to love Jesus. Yet it was common in Luke's day to write for and dedicate a book to a patron, who would help to publish the manuscript.

## WHEN LUKE WROTE:

Jesus died and rose in 33 A.D. For many years the life and mission of Jesus was transmitted word of mouth. St. Paul wrote his first letters around 50 A.D. Because of Luke's dependence on Mark's Gospel and his knowledge of the destruction of Jerusalem, 70 A.D., Luke most likely wrote the Gospel around 80 A.D.

## THE SCOPE OF LUKE'S WORK:

In his two volumes, Luke provides a salvation history in which God enters into human history. He presents three stages:

- Old Testament time:** The Law and the Prophets are presented as God's Covenant with the people of Israel. John the Baptist is presented as the last prophet who prepares the way for the Messiah, Jesus. In the infancy accounts Anna and Simeon bless the child Jesus when he is presented in the Temple. They represent the hopes and prayers of the Old Testament people.

- Jesus' time:** Jesus initiates the Reign of God. A new time has begun with Jesus. God enters history directly and personally through Jesus. Luke shows how Jesus fulfills the promises of the Old Testament and begins the Reign of God.

- Church's time:** Luke continues the spirit filled mission of Jesus after his death and resurrection through the Church. The Acts of the Apostles presents this third stage of salvation history that continues until the end of times.