

An Overview of the Gospel of Luke

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When Jesus walked the earth, he spoke and did many things, some of which have not been recorded. However, God laid it upon the hearts of some individuals to either write an orderly well thought out account while others wrote what they could recollect without any particular order except to present truth to the world. Among those that wrote especially a meticulously arranged record based on what they came across during their research is the author of Luke's Gospel, after whom the gospel is named. This gospel is thought to have been written by an individual that made painstaking efforts to research, collate, compare and compile an orderly narrative that not only would be factual but representative of what actually transpired thus enlightening his primary target readership. Being a Gentile and physician himself, Luke ensured that he recorded and clearly explained whatever he discovered during his enquiry in a way that would easily and effectively resonate with his immediate target readership, eliminating all possible doubt as well as including relevant facts other gospel writers may have omitted, missed out or not emphasized. This presupposes that Luke probably had access to the other gospels, especially Mark or oral traditions which he may have consulted or exploited as sources in addition to other valid secular documents. Luke's aim is evidently to present an orderly account of what actually transpired so that his primary readership may either be edified or instructed whoever they may be. To achieve this objective, the author delves into some considerable amount of detail, including tracing Jesus' genealogy all the way to Adam the son of God. Thus, Luke proves that Jesus' ministry and mission benefits entire mankind. But the writer (who we assume was Dr Luke) does much more. He carefully explains many things that would otherwise not have been meaningful to the Gentile reader not conversant with Jewish custom or culture. Additionally, Luke gives insight into the miraculous healing of diseases that Jesus encountered with remarkable precision and accuracy. The high Greek quality and attendant order in the narrative is evident, small wonder why the gospel of Luke is the most complete account among the synoptic gospels.

Background to the Gospel

Taken together, Acts and Luke record the genesis and progress of the gospel as we have it. Luke is written for most likely an individual or a group of people dubbed to be friends of God for the word "*Theophilus*" means just that. The

gospel may be divided into five parts each section pointing to a unique aspect of the work of Christ, his genealogy, alignment to the poor and death on the cross capped by his resurrection and ascension (Berkhof 46-47). The author of this narrative takes time to explain all these and more so that the reader may understand the gist of the gospel thus presented. The writer of the gospel and Acts is believed to be the same because the language, narration and thought pattern appears to seamlessly flow and is in fact from a similar if not same source. Another internal clue pointing to Luke authorship is the prologue or address that the author gives in Acts 1. First the writer refers to a “former book” (Acts 1:1-5) and secondly states that *Theophilus* is the one addressed. While the “former” may refer to the gospel, the latter indicator points to the same recipient of the gospel (i.e. the former book). As to why Luke, supposedly the Doctor, wrote to this probably noble or important Roman official is uncertain but one thing is, Jesus was presented in clear terms as not only the miracle worker but the savior of the world. Further, it may be said as some have suggested that the gospel makes up the first of a two volume set while Acts is technically the “fifth gospel” stretching or nearly covering a thirty year period from the first to the last chapter. Dr Campbell Morgan aptly puts it beautifully when he states the following words: “*We then take up the book of Acts of the Apostles and read it: “The former treatise I made, O Theophilus.” The continuity is apparent on the surface. We have the same writer, Luke; the same reader, Theophilus; the same subject, Jesus.*”(Morgan 9). The gospel narrates the nativity story and gives a somewhat detailed genealogy from Jesus back all the way to Adam whom the writer dubs “The Son of God”. Furthermore, the book presents parables, records miracles and other sayings pointing to the savior. The striking medical terminologies the scribe employs in the various healing episodes and diagnosis of diseases strongly suggests and in sync with other Biblical evidence that the author was indeed a physician. Infact, elsewhere, Paul calls Luke “the beloved physician.” This partly rests our case.

The Author, Primary Target Readership, Location of Writing and approximate Date of Book Composition

As hinted at in the previous section, the gospel is attributed to Luke, a medical doctor as Ryle and others vehemently suggest (Ryle 25; Hale 183)¹, who undertook painstaking research to compose an orderly account in relation to Jesus Christ. As to his actual identity, origin or back ground, history has veiled these facts except pockets of what scripture has chosen to reveal such as

¹ Ryle states thus in his write up on “*Luke the beloved physician*”: “*There are two things in the title of this paper which I shall take for granted, and not dwell on them. One is that Luke here mentioned is the same Luke who wrote the third gospel and Acts of the Apostles, and was the friend and companion of St. Paul. The other is, that Luke really was a physician of the body. On both these points the consent of learned men, who have a right to command our attention, is almost universal...*” pp25

Colossians 4:14, 2 Timothy 4:11 including the famous “we” passages of the book of Acts (e.g. Acts 16: 10;20:6). As earlier suggested, the book is attributed to Luke because of the medical terminologies used as well as the refined language used in the book. Luke was not an apostle, let alone an eye witness of what transpired during Jesus’ earthly ministry times but his record is extremely accurate agreeing with the other synoptic gospels. Hale sums up this thought very well when he asserts the following: “*Luke, was above all, a historian. He was very careful both in his Gospel and in the book of Acts to give accurate historical details. Luke’s accuracy has been completely confirmed by other historical writings of that period and by numerous archeological findings...it’s totally true and historical.*” (Hale 183). One interesting feature is that Luke was not a Jew but probably a Greek though wrote for a wider readership other than the Palestinian Jews but all people whether Hellenistic Jews or Gentiles at large. Dr Thomas Hale further states the following in support of this assertion: “*whereas Matthew was a Jew who wrote his Gospel mainly for Jewish readers, Luke was a Greek, that is, a Gentile. Therefore, Luke has written his Gospel in a way that Gentiles would easily understand.*” Other individuals have however been suggested as possible authors of the book but in this paper, we assume with many credible authorities including Ryle and Hale that Luke the physician is the one who put pen to paper under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by virtue of his close association with the apostles, as well as his godliness (Colossians 4:14). In all probability, although he may not have been a Jew, Luke was well versed in what was happening not only in Palestine but other parts of the known world then. As to the timing of the composition, it is difficult to assert for sure but some have suggested that the gospel could have been written between AD 54 and 68 though some argue that it was probably written just before or after AD 70 because Luke is said to have sourced some his materials likely from the Jewish historian Josephus’ writings (apart from the oral and other written sources). Thomas Hale for instance holds that the gospel was written between 65 and 70 AD assuming that Luke depended on Mark’s gospel as well as other extant sources to draft his account. Let us hear the venerable Doctor in his own words: “*While writing his own Gospel, Luke had with him a copy of Mark’s Gospel. Therefore, Luke has repeated in his Gospel many of the verses that Mark wrote...Luke also used other material to write his history of Jesus’ life...*” (Hale 183). The writing location is probably Achaia, Rome, Caesarea, Asia Minor or Corinth because of the evident high Greek language proficiency. The primary recipient of this gospel is *Theophilus* (i.e. beloved one or Friend of God) but secondarily, other readers (Greeks or Gentiles) around the world (in addition to Jews) are exposed to the gospel through this authentic gospel narrative.

Purpose of the Gospel Composition

Luke is a gospel written by a physician whose single end was to compile an orderly account of what actually transpired during Jesus’ ministry here on earth (refer to Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-2). The recipient, *Theophilus*, was likely a high

ranking official either in the Roman empire circles or indeed in another setting because Luke at some point in one of his chapters addresses him “*most excellent*”, a probable term designated for nobles (Zondavan NIV study Bible 1564). It would appear that *Theophilus* needed an accurate narrative of what really transpired in relation to the Lord Jesus and thus, the pen man of Luke’s Gospel undertook this task bequeathing us this well written record. The primary purpose therefore would be to both inform and educate *Theophilus* or any secondary reader about the good news of Jesus Christ. From this premise, we safely may assume that probably *Theophilus* was sympathetic to the Christian gospel or possibly exposed to some gospel of sorts, perhaps a defective account and so this mighty historian undertakes a great work to either correct or confirm what this venerable official may have heard. If the former be the case (i.e. to correct wrong notions), then Luke sought to stamp the truth over the erroneous misleading information which may have had the potential of fueling trouble for Christian message but if the latter be true, it would appear that *Theophilus* may have been seeking further light on the way of salvation and thus would have been more than glad to have received further instruction. Christians desperately need to take accurate record keeping and writing for present generations and posterity very serious. Luke saw this from afar and hath thus bequeathed such a wealth of truth which could have easily been lost to history.

The Relationship of Luke with the Other Gospels

Luke’s gospel is similar to other gospels and thus dubbed one of the synoptic gospels (i.e. with Matthew and Mark). It is believed to have been written later than both Matthew and Mark though earlier than John. A theory has been floated around for years that Luke relied on the two gospels and other writings extant in his day that he had access to. That said, Luke is very meticulous as he presents his case to the *Theophilus* so that the same person may know the certainty of the things that had taken place. Thus we may say that Luke is closely knit and connected to the synoptic and Acts while being different from John’s gospel in approach not content.

Some Key Content aspects of the Gospel

The Gospel narrative found in Luke has many key features which were evidently carefully pieced together or compiled from various sources by the author. The gospel is the longest among the four inspired narratives and each scene is carefully placed, probably in chronological order having been authored after much painstaking research and compilations from available information. This gospel narrative touches on a number of many important points relating to the life of Jesus, and more interestingly seems to highlight aspects covered by the other synoptic gospels although not in the same order that the other gospel authors put them across. In this section however, we give an over view of the said gospel

making brisk comments on some interesting points although the entire book is one cohesive inspired whole.

The starting point in analyzing this book is to state that Luke, as earlier asserted, wrote to one *Theophilus*, whose real identity is not clearly ascertained for sure. But it would appear that this selfsame *Theophilus* may have received some impressions about the gospel whether complete, incomplete, correct or incorrect. Luke therefore sets out to either correct the record or to affirm the new found faith of this noble man (Luke 1:1), whom he calls “most excellent *Theophilus*” at some point in his writings (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1). Having given his preamble, Luke provides some back ground information about the reign of some authorities (i.e. King Herod) and how the angel appears to Zechariah. This holy man, belonging to a Priestly dynasty, was serving in the Temple as per schedule and time frame. Chosen by lot (as was customary in their day) Zechariah proceeded to diligently execute his duty but encounters the celestial being who gives a promise, which stunned the mere mortal. Accordingly, the gospel gives some detailed account as to the human parentage of John the Baptizer and how nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37). At another point in the gospel, Mary receives a revelation about her soon to be born son and hurries on to meet her cousin Elizabeth. The eye catching event here is more than just the appearance of the angel to these people but the description of the miraculous conception of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was to be fully human and yet conceived of the Holy Spirit meaning he was shielded from sin and yet had a human nature. Some have dismissed this assertion in Luke 1:35 as being superfluous and wishful. But this is what sets Jesus apart from the rest of humanity. This also confirms his duo nature; that of divine and human at the same time and yet not intermixed in any way. We may further say, moving on from this key point that the gospel gives startling accounts of what some devout people pronounced or said about Jesus or John the Baptist when these two are presented at the Temple, in keeping with the expected tradition and ritual. From then on, John prepares the way, baptizes, urges people to repentance and at some time falls into trouble with the powers that be. His direct, bold and blunt preaching raffles not a few feathers and eventually is imprisoned (Luke 3:20). This often happens even today, human nature never changes at all. The story of Jesus is told alongside that of John though at some point, Jesus takes the centre stage. Jesus is initially presented at the Temple (Luke 2:21) as a baby and then an eleven year silent period ensues before he comes to Jerusalem to worship with his parents at age 12. As the parents journey home, they later discover that their son is not among the kinsfolk and probably must have been left behind. They make the inconveniencing and anxious journey back to Jerusalem only to discover him in the Temple, perched among the theological giants of the day, whom he clearly and intelligently engaged. His response to the parents is even more startling when they indirectly demand an apology. Jesus returns home with his parents and is said to be obedient (Luke 2:52). Another 18 year silence in Jesus’ life is not recorded by any of the gospel writers including Luke but other extra biblical sources have attempted to shed some light thereby filling in this gap with all sorts of stories,

some too weird and strange to believe as they suggest that Jesus must have displayed some magical powers. However, the inspired writers pass over this period and fast forward their narration to when Jesus is about thirty years old having proved that he was the promised messiah and rightful person as prophesied in the Old Testament. The elaborate genealogy does just that remarkably well though a modern reader may not appreciate this (Luke 3:21-38). Jesus commences his public ministry after his baptism and desert temptation. He then comes across as a fiery preacher announcing the advent of the Kingdom of God as well as urging men to turn to God. John “whips them” into heaven by their fleeing from the wrath that was imminent and certainly will come upon all men unless they repent. Such bold preachers are few and far between in these degenerate days. Everyone loves popularity and respectability, not John! That said, the book of Luke records so many miracles that are carefully and ‘detailedly’ narrated in the book. Unlike Mark or Matthew that just state the miracles that Jesus performed, Luke seems to take particular and meticulous attention on the types of miracles wrought, to whom and how they were executed. His careful narration and description of diseases has proved to a great extent that Luke was indeed a physician (Colossians 4:14). We pick on a few miracles as discussion points. Take for instance the miracle recorded in chapter 4 where Jesus cleanses a man demon possessed and yet found in the place of worship! It is amazing that even demons can comfortably gather among the religious and only disturbed by a spiritual man-Jesus. The next account is about the multiple healing of many people who came to Jesus for a divine solution. He cared not only for their spiritual but physical wellbeing as well (Luke 4:38-44). Other miracles pour apace as the gospel narrative unfolds, in each case pointing to Jesus as the promised messiah. Miracles were meant to authenticate the ministry of Jesus Christ not for mere show or popularity as is often the case in these degenerate days.

But then Luke captures some salient events presented in the other gospels. For instance, the gospel highlights several parables equally found in Mark or Matthew with startling factual accuracy though he uses other words or arranges them differently. Take the parable of the lost son recorded in Luke 15. A similar parable of two sons is also found in Matthew 21:28 and essentially aims at teaching one main central truth, of God’s love for mankind, if only they can turn back to Him in repentance and faith, God will definitely pardon them. Admittedly, many interpretations and lessons have been derived from this parable but one needs to have the right hermeneutical approach if they are to arrive at the right interpretation. The first starting point is defining what a parable is and then proceeding to understand the nature of parables, why they were used and how the immediate audience would have understood the picture language. It will also help the interpreter to arrive at the authorial intent before they impose their own preferred interpretation of even application. Careful exegesis and correct hermeneutic is essential. For instance, in this case of the ‘Lost Son’, we need to establish the central truth taught out of it. The characters in the scene may be helpful to discover how various parties would react and why the prodigal son, as

some have called the younger son, was accepted while the other's reaction was a negative lesson. Parables are of different types, purpose and length (Chueng 2014). Some are relatively long while others are extremely short that one scarcely realizes that the Lord was using one. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16) is a classic case though people debate whether this was actual or merely a story. For our discussion, we take it as a parable with actual literal meaning, the issue of hell is a reality. This is a rather detailed description and an example of a long parable. The parable shows the final destiny of two people that once walked different paths while on earth. The one lived in luxury everyday, ate well and really had no time for religion or matters relating to their eternal soul while the other (Lazarus) lived daily in abject poverty, often feeding from the crumbs that fell from the affluent colleague's table. When they both died, their destinies were different with Lazarus ascending to Abraham's bosom or a place of peace, comfort, rest and love. The other descended to Hell where things were horribly bad and excruciatingly painful. The story demonstrates the stark differences of these two people contingent on how they lived on the earth. The narrative underscores several facts which include the following: 1. Hell is a literal reality and not merely a fairy tale derived from ancient Greek mythology. People will and do go there when they die. 2. A person's destiny is determined by the choices they make while alive on the earth. They will have no one to blame for their rude awakening in Hell if they do not take heed of the gospel call here and now. 3. The suffering in Hell is too terrible to describe as is the bliss in Heaven too good to adequately describe. 4. There is a clear separation (chasm) between Heaven and Hell. A person from either side cannot cross over for any reason. 5. The gospel opportunity is possible only in this life not in some purgatory or limbo where people can make things right themselves or by other people's prayers. This makes gospel preaching very urgent and necessary. However, there are some people who claim that the story here narrated has been over stretched to mean what it was not originally meant to teach. Among those that hold this defective position are the annihilationists denying the reality of a literal Hell. They argue that this "theory" is inconsistent with a loving God. Further, they argue that the story is only an imaginary one, period! Pundits argue that it is meant to teach good virtues and right living lest one is flashed out of existence, which to them, is punishment enough. But a careful and consistent reading of the Bible will reveal that the Lord Jesus meant every word he uttered in the book. So much then for the longer parables, we now briefly cite an example of a short parable. Consider the parable in Luke 21: 29-30; this is a very short parable with a definite meaning. It is exceptionally short but definitely loaded with meaning that immediately resonated with the contemporary audience. But then, what is the exact definition of a parable? Perhaps one of the best definitions comes from Machen and Boyd when they state the following:

A parable is a narrative taken from ordinary life, but intended to teach some spiritual lesson. It differs from an allegory in that the application is not to be carried out in such detail. Ordinarily a parable teaches simply

one lesson; there is only one point of similarity between the literal meaning of the parable and the deeper spiritual truth (Boyd & Machen 46).

Another equally good description comes from Vincent Chueng when he states the following:

The Hebrew word for parable is masal, and is used thirty-nine times in the Old Testament. In twenty-eight of those thirty-nine instances, the Greek word used to translate masal is parabole. From observing the instances of masal being translated as parabole, one may derive the range of meanings for the word "parable." This tells us how some scholars arrived at their definitions of a parable, but it remains that their definitions are sometimes not identical, and therefore what seems to be a parable to one may not appear so to another. However, the disagreements are seldom so significant as to render communication and meaningful study impossible. In any case, parabole is a compound Greek word meaning "to set along side." In biblical usage, a parable compares or contrasts an earthly reality and a spiritual truth. In the Gospels, Jesus sometimes would say such things as, "The kingdom of Heaven is like" (Matthew 13:24), or "What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to?" (Luke 13:18).

This is instructive. As to the aim or purpose of the parable, it is evident that the parable was probably a common way of communicating in Jesus' day where the speaker used figures of speech or aspects thereof relating to everyday life to which people could resonate with amazing effectiveness. It is also apparent that the parable method at times veiled truths which the unbelievers failed to comprehend and thus lost the opportunity to be saved. Let us once again hear from Vincent Chueng on the purposes of parables when he states thus:

Why use parables? A popular explanation is that Jesus used them to make spiritual truths easier for his audience to understand. Some preachers would say, "God always makes things simple. For example, Jesus used parables while he was speaking to the masses. He took things out of their daily lives to explain spiritual truths to them." They would admonish other ministers to become more imaginative and entertaining by using narratives and parables in their sermons.

Although Chueng has an alternative explanation to the aim and efficacy of parables, he at least gives the popular notions surrounding parables. We would encourage readers to carefully explore his enlightening arguments. For now, we proceed with what we have thus far stated, parables were a contemporary window to spiritual truth instruction.

The gospel of Luke lends some considerable detail to the prophetic aspects of the Lord's mission and what would transpire in future. For instance, before Jesus enters Jerusalem (Luke 19:28ff), he at some point makes assertions relating to

his death as prophesied but rise again on the third day. In the same breathe, Jesus laments over Jerusalem that it would be besieged and destroyed by the Gentiles (Luke 19:41). This is in apparent reference to the destruction of the City and therefore the Temple in AD 70 which came to pass when Titus the Roman Commander overran the city. This point alone suggests that the gospel of Luke could possibly have been written before AD 70 although some dispute this fact. Furthermore, it appears that some of Jesus' prophesies have a duo application; the first has to do with the immediate scenario surrounding the destruction of the Temple while the other points to a longer picture towards the end of the world. Naturally, the subject of the "*Kingdom of God*" comes about in these prophetic discussions. The question that begs answering is: When is the Kingdom of God to be, when Jesus came or at some future time, probably during the 1,000 year millennial physical and personal reign of Christ? Many answers come to the fore depending on one's eschatological inclination and thus we dare not delve into the details as this is beyond the scope of this paper. A short thought provoking idea would not hurt though: When Jesus is asked when he would restore or establish the Kingdom of God, what are we to make of this? (Luke 24). On the other hand, when Jesus is asked when the Kingdom would come, Jesus answers that the Kingdom was within them already! (Luke 17:21). How then would we best arrive at the answer? The question remains unresolved. However, one thing is true, the world will come to an end at some point and every soul must be ready to give account (2 Corinthians 5:10).

The Sabbath issue seems (e.g. Luke 6:1-11) to have repeatedly popped up in this gospel narrative as was the case in Mark. The motive for these writers to record these instances is not clear but it would appear that the God wanted to have his new covenant people grasp and understand that the spirit of the command and not blind loyalty to some manmade rule being the essence of the command. The Jews, especially the Pharisees, were so heavily glued to the form rather than the reality. Even today, some denominations are so firmly tied to one form of ritual or other which has absolutely no bearing on their eternal welfare. In those incidences, Jesus repeatedly demonstrates that He is Lord of even the Sabbath and works of necessity and mercy are permissible, not mere slavish legalism. The apostle Paul as well as the early Christians battled with this question repeatedly, especially as the gospel surmounted the Jewish bounds crossing into the larger Roman world and beyond. The Acts 15 Jerusalem council is instructive as well as Paul's assertions in Colossians 2:16, Romans 14, Philippians 3 and elsewhere. The Hebrews 4 account also sheds some light on this matter. Jesus was and remains Lord of the Sabbath even today. In him we find rest for our souls.

The way Jesus' disciples, let alone, apostles progressively understood and appreciated him despite the outstanding evidences he gave may startle many of us that it vividly appears Jesus was no ordinary man. However, we learn that unless the lord reveals himself, we cannot know or appreciate him. Spiritual blindness in our lot unless regenerated by the Spirit of God. (Ephesians 2:1-3;

Titus 3:3-7). Take the case of the storm at sea that generated panic among the disciples despite the savior of the world being amongst them. Notice how they exclaim after he calms the storm! (Luke 8:22-25). Salvation is of the Lord. Additionally, one probable reason why they may have found it difficult believe in him was that probably many other contemporary fellow equally performed similar miraculous feats in their day though the source of these powers were spurious or suspect at best. Jesus' miracles were outstandingly simple complete works. As late as 24th chapter, it appears the disciples did not really know who exactly Jesus was and appear to have felt disillusioned or lost hope given Emmaus road discourse. Only when Jesus offers the blessing on the food do they realize that he was among them! Depression and myopia can easily blind us to some realities. Once again, God must reveal himself to us for us to recognize him.

Yet another aspect that captures one's attention as they read this gospel narrative is the emphasis on faith in the lord Jesus. The case of the Roman official whose servant was ill is a case in point. Jesus heals the person because of the faith expressed by the official (Luke 7). The same goes for the woman who had an issue of blood (Luke 8:43-48).

A further unique feature marking Luke's account is the apparent reference to the various customs, rulers and occurrences of the day with relative ease and accuracy. There is remarkable detail given in his narrative and helps to approximate dates when things may have transpired. For instance, he talks about "*in the reign of Tiberius*" (Luke 3:1) etc, this gives an idea of timing when things may have actually transpired. Second, Luke mentions the various Roman or Jewish rulers without much ado demonstrating that he aptly knew and understood his context exceptionally well, including the contemporary laws, beliefs or customs at play in a given scenario. Take, for example, the demand for the release of Barabbas recorded in Luke 23:13-25. The Jews knew that there was a provision for this. Another example will do. Jesus is about to be condemned to die by the Jews but Pilate thinks otherwise, instead opting to release him after some flogging. The masses violently object and accuse Jesus of blasphemy punishable by death. A logical question that begs answering is why the differences of opinion? The answer is soon given; the two groups were using different laws and therefore had different perspectives to the same issues.

Before closing off this brief over view of the gospel's content, it is well worth mentioning that the author of the third gospel neatly weaves the content of the first two gospels (i.e. Matthew and Mark) in such a way that as one reads the narrative, they may feel as though they were actually reading either of them though in a different arrangement and order. There are many similarities among the synoptic gospels such that this has generated considerable debate as to the originality and authenticity of each gospel text narrative. For instance, we read of the beatitudes in Luke as well as in Matthew except that each presents them in a very different fashion though the central message is essentially the same. For another thing, both Matthew and Luke present what has come to be known as

the golden rule of interaction and behavior-*doing unto others as we would like to be done unto us*. Luke 6 presents this rule much like its counterpart gospel. For many generations, this has been used as a weighty ethical mantra of behavior and thinking until Immanuel Kant the German Philosopher of the 18th century came along, claiming that the golden rule was defective and in many senses not logically consistent. He instead introduced what has come to be known as the '*categorical imperative*' where he asserts that we should do unto others what any sane and rational person would do his actual words being: "*Act according to the maxim that you would wish all other rational people to follow, as if it were a universal law*". He or his followers claimed that this Kantian rule was superior and more comprehensive to our Lord's words but what can be further from the truth! For one thing, the Kantian argument was limited only to human interactions while our Lord's saying was even broader (Pecorino, chapter 8). For another, both the Lord's and Kantian sentiments can be classified under the deontological ethical category though one derives its inspiration from the divine (Jesus) while the other from a mere mortal. That said, the golden rule continues to be mightily influential even in the post modern context or contemporary world.

Thus, we have seen that the Gospel is a rich shaft presenting many important facts that *Theophilus* must have really appreciated as he perused through the account, perhaps comparing notes with other extant gospel accounts. Dr Luke definitely did a great job despite being a Gentile believer. His meticulous attention to detail, accuracy and historical pen certainly have done great service to the world which we could have easily lost to time distance and history. Although written to a particular individual, akin to a great research report, his work has enriched the entire human race with a deposit of the written everlasting gospel.

Unique Features/Characteristics of the Gospel

Luke has many striking unique features that come to the fore as one reads. The first thing is just how the book opens up, progresses, giving graphic detail before it closes off with some striking incidents such as the Emmaus road encounter and ascension of Jesus. We present some other unique features in the points that ensue:

1. Luke was most likely a physician and probably well trained, hence the high quality of his work.
2. Luke is the most orderly account of the good news given the meticulous care and attention the author undertook in collating, compiling and writing the account.

3. Arising from the previous point, Luke gives some idea of when particular events occurred and thus relatively helpful to approximate the exact time frame when particular events occurred.
4. This gospel is addressed to an individual (*Theophilus*) or a group of people unlike the other gospels which are not specifically addressed to anyone individual in a similar way.
5. Luke's narrative is relatively long but of course shorter than Matthew's gospel by about four chapters. In those pages, the gospel presents a compelling factual case that *Theophilus* does well to pay careful attention to.
6. Luke's genealogy comes in the second chapter and traces Jesus' ancestry line all the way to Adam the Son of God. This alone proves that Jesus was fully man with a clear lineage.
7. The account is the most complete of the entire gospel set giving unusual detail as would only be possible by medical personnel. Luke also gives indications of when events happened and thus indirectly giving dates.
8. The gospel is written in superior Greek relatively and by that token was more universal in its appeal and message presentation. The Jew as well as the Gentile has a place in Christ.

Evidently, the gospel stands unique from others and yet bears the divine stamp of eternity upon it. However, the book has its own unique difficulties, some of which arise from the points already mentioned above. We therefore proceed to consider perceived challenges with this great book.

Perceived Problems with Luke's Gospel

Like all other ancient writings without extant original monographs, Luke has had its own fair share of challenges, especially from skeptics or critics. They present some cases which have at times puzzled them or simply attempt to dismantle the holy writ. First, the fact that Luke supposedly sources his materials from Mark, oral tradition as well as other sources (e.g. Josephus' antiquities history), skeptics have questioned as to the canonicity and inspiration of the narrative. They argue that Holy Scripture should have direct revelation from God rather than through other man made mediums. In short, they claim that LUKE is a mere work of a clever mortal with nothing special about it. Second, the identity of the actual author is not expressly stated except for some scattered external and

internal evidence that suggests that the author is for a fact Luke the beloved physician (Colossians 4:14). Third, the gospel of Luke is said to be an orderly complete account meaning that everything written was carefully and intentionally compiled and patched up together to produce a compelling case. What if the writer had a sinister motive to compile a case that actually never was meant to be that way? Fourth, the fact that the author uses Greek medical terms does not in itself prove that the writer was for a fact a physician, although it may suggest that. Fifth, there is insufficient conclusive evidence that the writer of Luke's gospel is necessarily the same author of the book of Acts. Sixth, the compiler of Luke's gospel never once claims to have been an eye witness of the events he writes about (though asserts that he had first hand access to the source documents) and took nearly 15 years or more after the actual events to draft his narrative, so how can his narrative be trust worthy? The compilers of the African Bible commentary make this point very clear which certainly deserve attention. Let us hear them in their own words: "*The author of this gospel is traditionally said to have been Luke...the writer of this gospel does not claim to have been an eye witness of the life and work of Jesus, but declares that he had access to first hand sources of information for writing his account.*" (1203; Berkhof 49). Finally, some doubt that Luke actually wrote the gospel and instead suggest others like the apostle Paul (through dictation???), John Mark or some other such individual.

In attempting to respond to all these perceived weaknesses and challenges to the gospel, almost each and every one of these skeptic arguments can be responded to, let alone punctured with holes for inconsistencies. For instance, the argument that the writer of Luke's gospel may not necessarily or automatically have been the same person, what does the internal evidence suggest? It is plain and simple, Luke wrote both to one person! Other evidence comes from the writings of Paul who makes it abundantly clear that he had close associations with Luke, as the Acts clearly demonstrates. Further, we may argue that fresh and forth coming evidence from different sources such as archeological finds seem to vindicate Luke's account thus validating the integrity of the narrative. Luke was more than a medical practitioner, he was a very astute and meticulous historian who would not have wasted his brilliant mind fabricating stories and to what end any way? Lastly, the source argument and time taken for the gospel to be drafted does not change the fact that a carefully written account came forth and gives a reliable inspired record of what actually transpired from the pen of a great historian, missionary and physician. Dr Luke actually ought to be commended rather than criticized!

From the foregoing, we can see that Luke's gospel although very comprehensively (although admittedly not as precise as Mark on detail) well written raises some challenges for the present day skeptic.

What we Learn from Luke's Gospel

Luke presents many lessons for the modern reader. First, the book is very orderly. This means the writer first researched and then wrote the book. We should learn from Luke that quality work is borne out of painstaking efforts. Second, Luke had a profession as a physician but took an active interest in writing, at the same time a travelling companion of Paul. We can do much outside our respective domains of specialty. Never be boxed. In the third place, Luke was as objective as could be and yet candid too. He never attempted to hide some lousy episodes from the public eye or future generation. Take for instance the fracas between Paul and Barnabas over John Mark recorded in Acts 15.

Conclusion

Luke is unquestionably the most orderly account among the gospels. Written to and for *Theophilus*, the author took pains to investigate and then produce a lasting account based on the extant facts. Though some suggest and argue that Luke drew on various sources including Matthew and Mark as well as the writings of historians like Josephus, the content of the gospel bears the divine stamp. It is written from the trained eye of the physician who took pains to carefully detail what he came across during his research. Although Luke appears not to have been an eye witness to what happened during the Lord's earthly ministry, his was a thorough job, buttressed by his companionship with other Apostles like Paul and Peter. His second volume, Acts gives further detail on the progression of the gospel. In this case, he is an eye witness for most, if not all of his Acts narrative. The gospel itself has been accepted as canonical from ancient times and thus is authoritative as any other book in the Bible. Whatever it records agrees with other gospels, is most closely aligned to the Pauline writings and very well written (and relatively more complete) which any reader can easily follow through. The gospel of Luke therefore stands as a powerful resource for the present and future generations.

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