

The Lover of God

Introduction to Luke

- His introduction is written in the formal style of the secular historian.
- Unlike the other gospels in that it is part one of a two part work – Luke-Acts (why did they have to put John in the way?)
- he is more of a self-conscious historian than the other Gospel writers
- the idea that the Christian faith is built on firm historical events which can act as a foundation for the faith of his hearers/readers.

Authorship

- no direct evidence (e.g., not signed “with love, Luke”) so must examine internal and external evidence
- internal evidence:
 - author is not an eyewitness to most of the events in his two volumes, but relies upon his studies of traditions from eyewitnesses and other accounts
 - presents himself as a companion of Paul in the “we-sections” of Acts (16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16)
 - genuinely an eye-witness or is this a literary device? Probably the former.
- external evidence
 - Paul names his traveling companions and Luke is among them (Philem. 24; Col 4:14)
 - from the list of potential authors (the other traveling companions), the early church only ever calls Luke the author of the third gospel; by 200 AD this tradition is fixed with no contradictions
- Luke was probably a Gentile

Purpose

- to write an orderly account (Lk 1:1-4)
- dedicated to Theophilus (real person, or symbolic “one who loves God”?)
(common to dedicate a work to an individual even if intended for widespread reading)
- orderly account – doesn’t seem very orderly in places, such as the travel narrative. It is not chronological. Probably means along the lines of “investigating everything fully”, more of a coordination of all accounts.
- “so that you may know the certainty of what you have been taught”
 - like a catechism. Theophilus could have been either a Christian or a non-Christian who needed his facts put right, the record set straight
- intended as a defense of Christianity?
 - to show that it is not opposed to the Roman empire, that it is very Jewish and should be accorded the same privileges/status as Judaism (no Roman official ever finds anyone guilty of anything in Luke-Acts. Perhaps it is a defense of Paul, whose future is uncertain at the end of Acts. But who would read it?)

Basic Structure

- Similar to Mark's, but adds bits, such as infancy of Jesus, John the Baptist, resurrection appearances and the 'travel narrative'. Few place names; mostly stuff is put into topical buckets.
- Double-book. More correct to talk about Luke-Acts (shame that John comes in-between) Spot the links in Acts 1:1 – the only Gospel with a sequel
- both dedicated to Theophilus (real person, or symbolic "one who loves God"?)
- common vocabulary and use it similarly
- common themes (motifs)
- the structure throughout has something to do with motion, the overall sweep of action. From the backwaters of Galilee to the colonial capital of Jerusalem and then to the capital of the known world, Rome.

Luke's Sources

The Literary Interdependence of the Synoptic Gospels

(Notes from Stein, Robert. H *The Synoptic Problem: An Introduction*)

Overview:

1. Agreement in Wording
2. Agreement in Order
3. Agreement in parenthetical () material (let the reader understand)
4. Luke specifically acknowledges other narratives as a source.
5. Similarity in OT Quotations

1. Agreement in Wording

Passages to examine:

| | | |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Matt 19:13-15 | Mark 10:13-16 | Luke 18:15-17 |
| Matt 22:23-33 | Mark 12:18-27 | Luke 20:27-40 |
| Matt 24:4-8 | Mark 13:5-8 | Luke 21:8-11 |

(see details below)

Matt 19:13-15

¹³ Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them.

¹⁴ Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." ¹⁵ When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.

Mark 10:13-16

¹³ People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁵ Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." ¹⁶ And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

Luke 18:15-17

¹⁵ People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. ¹⁶ But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁷ Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

Matt 24:4-8

⁴ Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah,' and will deceive many. ⁶ You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.

⁷ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of birth pains.

Mark 13:5-8

⁵ Jesus said to them: "Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁶ Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many. ⁷ When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.

⁸ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.

Luke 21:8-11

⁸ He replied: "Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not follow them. ⁹ When you hear of wars and uprisings, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away."

¹⁰ Then he said to them: "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. ¹¹ There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven.

There are repeated exact agreements in wording.

Why? Possible reasons:

1) they all deal with the same incidents or sayings of Jesus. They agree because they are dealing with history. They are reporting exactly what happened and what was said.

Problems:

a) they do not agree exactly

b) Jesus spoke and taught in Aramaic, yet these accounts are pretty much exact in the Greek wording. It is unlikely that they would translate the words, and describe the actions of Jesus in the same Greek words as each other.

2) They were guided by the Holy Spirit in their writing. Okay, but wasn't John also guided by the Holy Spirit and if so, why is his Gospel so different? Only if you believe that the Holy Spirit inspired a dictation-style writing, can such exact agreements be explained.

3) The disciples took notes of Jesus' words and deeds which were eventually collected and arranged topically ("fragmentary hypothesis) but this still doesn't explain for the agreements in order.

2. Agreement in Order

Not just agreement in wording, but the events are recorded in the same sequence as each other in many cases. There is a common order, shared by all three evangelists.

Why? Possible reasons:

1. These events happened in that order, that is why they are so recorded. Except that, at times, the order is different. Obviously, more than "historical" considerations were in play here. Sometimes things are grouped together in subject matter (buckets), such as in Mark 1:23-2:12 we have five miracles of healing, interrupted at 1:35-39 by a summary; and from Mark 2:13-3:6 we have a collection of controversy stories. Topical rather than chronological order. Also, probably a common written source, as though oral sources could remember the content of the individual pericopes, it is unlikely that the order would be remembered.

3. Agreement in parenthetical material.

Editorial comments at exactly the same place (authors used italics).

Example:

Matt 24:15-18 Mark 13:14-16 Luke 21:20-22

(let the reader understand; let the reader understand; -----)

The editorial comment is exactly the same in Matt and Mark, but does not feature in Lk., so it is not *necessary* for the understanding of the story. Also, note that it refers to the **READER** not the hearer, pointing to the existence of a written source.

Second example:

Matt 9:1-8 Mark 2:1-12 Luke 5:17-26

(he then said to the paralytic; he said to the paralytic; he said to the man who was paralyzed)

Reminds of editorial directions in a play (then turn to the paralytic and say...)

Further examples:

Matt 8:28-29 Mark 5:1-8 Luke 8:26-29

(-----, For he had said to him, Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!; For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man.

Matt 27:15-18

Mark 15:6-10

(For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up; For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up)

4. Luke's acknowledgement of written accounts

See Lk 1:1-4 "inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative..."

Luke had available writings on the life and teachings of Jesus and made use of them, "followed all [these] things closely."

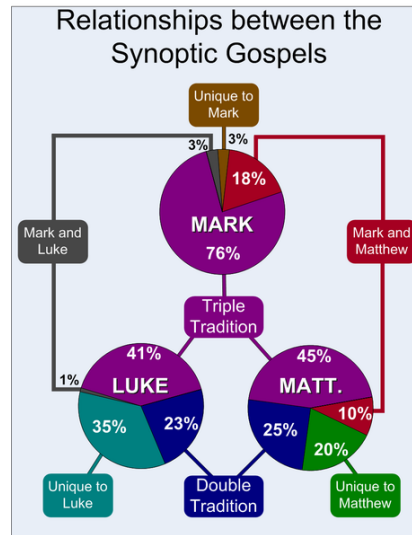
5. Similarity in OT Quotations

We find the exact same form of an OT quotation. This would not be remarkable if the quote were just lifted directly from the Hebrew OT, or from the Greek translation of the Hebrew OT, the Septuagint, but this is not the case. We find quotations which are exactly the same, but different from the Hebrew and the Septuagint. How else could this be explained except for literary interdependence.

Main theories of the relationship between the Gospels

1. Matthew wrote first, Mark used Matthew, Luke used Mark (Augustine)
2. Matthew wrote first, Luke used Matthew, Mark used Matthew and Luke (Griesbach/Farmer)
3. Mark wrote first, Matthew used Mark, Luke used Mark. Matthew and Luke also used another common source – "Q" (from Quelle, "source" in German) – The 2-Document Hypothesis.

The preferred solution is #3, the "Two-Document Hypothesis.", the major reasons being arguments for the priority of Mark, and the existence of Q. (but also known as the Four Document Hypothesis because of the addition of special Luke (L) and special Matthew (M); material which they added themselves for which no parallel is found (their own private sources, a document each, thus 4 document)



The Priority of Mark

1. Mark is the shortest Gospel.

Mark 661 verses; Matthew 1068; Luke 1149.

97.2% of Mark appears in Matthew

88.4% of Mark appears in Luke.

It is easier to understand Matt and Luke adding to Markan material, than to think of Mark using Matthew's and Luke's material and leaving so much out. He omits:

- a) the birth accounts
- b) the Sermon on the Mount
- c) the Lord's Prayer
- d) various resurrection appearances

If Mark was really trying to write an abridged gospel, why would he choose to make the stories they have in common, longer

2. Mark has the poorest Greek.

It is likely that Matt and Luke have improved Mark's Greek, than that he took their better Greek and made it worse.

3. Mark has more apparent "hard readings" (theological difficulties).

More likely that Matt and Luke would have tried to smooth these out, rather than Mark complicating what was clear already. (e.g. apparent limitations of Jesus' power Mk 1:32-34; 3:9-10; 6:5-6 – and see their parallels in the other Gospels)

4. The lack of Matthew-Luke Verbal Agreements against Mark (p.788, *DJG*)
5. The lack of Matthew-Luke Agreements in Order against Mark (p.788, *DJG*)
6. Certain Literary Agreements Are Best Explained by a Markan priority. (p.789, *DJG*)
7. The Argument from Redaction (editing) (p.789, *DJG*)
8. Mark's theology is less developed. (p.789, *DJG*)

The Existence of Q

There is material found in common in Luke and Matthew which did not come from Mark. Examples: Matt 6:24/Lk 16:13; Matt 7:7-11/Lk 11:9-13; Matt 11:25-27/Lk 10:21-22; Matt 23:37-39; Lk 13:34-35

1. Matthew and Luke did not know each other

- Luke lacks the Matthean additions to the triple tradition.
- The Q material is found in a different context in Luke
- At times, the Q material is less developed in Luke
- lack of Matthew-Luke agreements in order and wording against Mark
- the lack of M (Matthew) material in Luke

2. Was Q a written or oral source?

Arguments in favor of written:

- exactness of wording in some of the Q parallels e.g. Matt 6:24/Lk 16:13 where 27 of 28 words are exactly the same
- agreement in order
- double accounts of the same incident (related by Mark and Q perhaps)

Characteristics/Key Themes in Luke

- the motion theme is important
- the Gentile nature of the book (Aramaic translations provided)
- friendly to Gentiles
- Luke is down-to-earth, anchored in Roman time and society (Quirinius)
- comprehensive; relates things to the political realities around him
- very interested in people – gets everyone in
- an interest in individuals, especially concerned with those who are socially unacceptable or outcasts e.g. lepers, robbers, Pharisee and tax collector parable, Samaritans, women, children – shows how Jesus is prepared to talk to the “not very nice” people
- interested in social issues such as poverty, wealth, violence, pacifism
- spiritual interests: joy, rejoicing, prayer, salvation process, the Holy Spirit

Key features of the cultural context of Luke's gospel (Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*)

1. The political world and the balance of power in Greco-Roman Palestine

- 1:5a – King Herod of Judea, time of political tension – he came to power despite resistance from the Jewish elders in Jerusalem; secular power base; problematic economic and cultural affairs.

- the sociopolitical concerns of Luke 1 & 2
- the census. The prosperity and peace for which the Roman empire was known was created by conquering and then taxing the conquered people
- Emperor Augustus (Octavian “the divine savior who has brought peace to the world”) in contrast to Luke’s presentation of the divine savior.
- Mary’s song – sociopolitical reversal, with the high brought down and the lowly elevated
- Luke makes it clear that all this happens in the context of the political turmoil of the Roman occupation of Palestine.
- crucifixion is a Roman form of execution...the cultural world is not merely an insignificant backdrop to the story.

2. Eschatological anticipation

- eschaton – end times
- the coming of God to rule in peace and justice
- angels, the Spirit being given, messianic expectations

3. Social status and social stratification (layers)

- concerns around power and privilege (see diagram)
- kings, landowners, shepherds, unclean persons, degraded, pious, Pharisees, clothing
- the importance of status reversal

4. The Centrality of the Jerusalem Temple

- the piety (“godfearingness”?) of Israel
- the importance of faithful obedience (to the law)
- portraits of piety (prayer, worship, fasting, expectant waiting)

5. Rural and urban life

- agricultural metaphors and stories
- socioeconomic realities
- social unrest

HOMEWORK:

1. Read Luke chapters 1-4
2. Read article by Ben Witherington on John the Baptist, *DJG*, 383-391 (included)