



Intro to the New Testament:

The Gospel of Luke-Acts

Session Two

Unity of Luke-Acts

- The prefaces of the two documents supports that Acts is continuous with the Gospel of Luke.
- Luke-Acts has a narrative aim: beginning in the Gospel we have the dawning of salvation and the opposition to John and Jesus the agents of salvation—how will God’s aim to bring salvation be realized amidst hostility and competing aims.
- So, Acts is more than a sequel to Luke; Luke sets up key expectations in his Gospel like Israel’s restoration, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the mission to and inclusion of the Gentiles in the community of God’s people and shows their fulfilment in Acts

Author

- Scholars are almost in universal agreement that Luke and Acts were written by the same person
- This makes Luke the largest contributor to the NT (28% of the whole)
- The NT texts indicate Luke to be a person of high status in the Christian mission as a coworker not an assistant of Paul who was either a Gentile or a non-Jewish Semite
- The narrative suggests Luke was studied in Israel's Scriptures and sacred traditions and had advanced education in Greek grammar, rhetoric and literature

Genre

- Luke's association with Acts brings his Gospel's genre as Greco-Roman biography into question; even if the gospel centres on Jesus the Acts doesn't fit the form
- He is concerned to interpret events to embed the present within the distant past in order to show continuity and to shape identity, structuring his narrative around its fulfillment of God's promises and consummation of his purpose
- If Luke-Acts are to be read together then Luke's purpose isn't to only tell the Jesus story or relate the spread of the church's mission or to highlight the important of Paul; Rather, as a unit these two books centre on the actualization of God's purpose, making his Gospel primarily Theological more than Christological

Audience & Writing Setting

- Luke dedicates his works to Theophilus who might be a potential or recent convert, or he might be a patron who sponsored Luke's works
- Both works are written with Gentiles rather than Jews in mind, particularly for those Gentiles who have an interest in the historical origins of Christianity
- So, the audience is most likely proselytes and especially God-fearers; these are ones who have renounced idolatry and immorality and attend Jewish synagogues

Universal Features of Luke's Gospel

- Luke seeks to promote Christianity in the Greco-Roman world at large which gives his Gospel a unique narrative with material missing in the other Gospels
- Like Matthew, Luke includes the great commission to evangelize all nations, however Luke's commission is a Hellenistic universality
- So, where Matthew concentrates on Jesus and the kingdom, Luke concentrates on Jesus and people drawing a picture of a more cosmopolitan saviour with broad sympathies
- Luke's Gospel also emphasizes Jesus as a man of prayer to a degree the others do not.

Text of Acts

- There are 2 primary textual types of Acts: the Alexandrian and the Western—each distinctive
- As early as the 17th suggestions Luke made two revisions to Acts so two types trace back to him
- Most scholars contend that the Western text does not represent the original text of Acts from the hand of Luke, however while not original it may contain superior readings at some points
- The study of Acts is mainly done on the assumption of the superiority of the Alexandrian text

Date

- Dating of Luke depends on a few things: If Acts closes Paul awaiting trial in Rome because that is as far as history had progressed then Acts dates from before A. D. 64–67
- If Luke wrote his Gospel before Acts then the Gospel must be slightly earlier than that
- Also because Luke depends on Mark, it would be written after Mark, so depending on how you date Mark
- Luke=After Mark and before Acts
- Could be as late as 75–125

Purposes

- Purpose of Luke-Acts is to strengthen the Christian movement in the face of opposition, calling them to continued faithfulness and witness in God's salvific project

Theological Focus

God's Purpose

- God's purpose/plan is of utmost importance in Acts and is shown throughout the narrative in a variety of ways
- This is especially apparent through terms that Luke uses to express God's design: purpose, it is necessary, to determine
- Luke emphasizes the divine will to certify the Christian mission is legitimate without eclipsing human decision making and involvement in the mission of the church
- So the communication of his purposes is an invitation for people to align themselves with it—some will refuse but some will embrace receiving salvation and join in the redemptive activity

Theological Focus

Salvation

- Salvation is at the heart of Acts, concerned to show the realization of God's purpose to bring salvation in all its fullness to all people
- Luke emphasizes that Jesus is not saviour in spite of the crucifixion, but because of it. He repeatedly uses the phrase it is necessary regarding the cross of Christ
- Salvation for Luke has 5 facets:
 - a. Incorporation and participation
 - b. Rescue from our enemies
 - c. Forgiveness of sins
 - d. Reception of the Holy Spirit
 - e. Salvation calls for response

Theological Focus

Discipleship

- It is this theme which shows us most clearly the interdependence of Luke's Gospel and the book of Acts
- Luke's Gospel compared to the other Gospels has the disciples participating in Jesus's ministry only a little bit
- Instead, in the Gospel, the disciples receive instruction and model for discipleship and then in Acts it shows how the disciples came to serve in the missionary work of Jesus