

A. Luke's Sources, Author, and Audience

1. Luke's Material

a. From Mark

Luke uses a little more than half of Mark's material, omitting:

- Mark 6:45-8:26 "the big omission"
- Mark 9:41-10:12 "the little omission"

b. Luke's unique material

Almost half of Luke's material is unique. See overhead

c. From Q

Luke seems to alternate between Mark and Q

- 3:1-6:1 draws from Mk
- 6:20-8:3 draws from Q – "the little interpolation" (Sermon on the plain)
- 8:4-9:50 draws from Mk
- 9:51-18:14 draws from Q – "the big interpolation" (Luke's travel narrative)
- 18:15-24:11 draws from Mk

d. Luke and Acts

Luke differs from the other Gospels in that Luke has a sequel, Acts. Many scholars prefer to treat Luke and Acts as a single two-volume work. See handout of the parallels between Luke and Acts

2. Audience

The Gospel of Luke begins by addressing Theophilus (1:1-4).

Luke 1:1-4. 1:1 Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, 1:2 just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, 1:3 I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 1:4 so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed.

Scholars do not know who Theophilus was. The name itself means "lover of God," which prompts some to wonder if Luke uses the name in a fictitious sense—addressed to anyone who loves God. If not a fictitious name, Theophilus may have been Luke's patron, providing financial support for his research and writing. Addressed as "most excellent," Theophilus is of high social or political status. Though addressed to Theophilus, Luke certainly aimed at a wider audience.

Both the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles addressed to Theophilus. Scrolls were about 30-35 feet in length; thus, Luke and Acts could not fit on a single scroll. Later, when early Christians were gathering the Gospels and other NT writings, Luke and Acts were grouped separately.

3. Author

a. Historian

Luke is explicit in identifying the historical context of the Gospel.

3:1 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, 3:2 during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness (NRSV Lk 3:1).

It is generally asserted that Luke is the first historian of the church. However, Luke was more than a historian. He was obviously a theologian with an important perspective on God's relation to humanity, Jesus, and the people of Israel.

Historiography (see Green page 17-18)

b. Luke the physician (?)

Reference to Luke: Col 4:11 [Gentile] and 14 [physician]; Phlm. 24; 2 Tim 4:11.
References to the "eye-witnesses": Acts 16:10-17; 20:5:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16.
Muratorian Canon (170-80 CE)

Muratorian Canon (170-80 C.E.) is the earliest witness to claim Luke's authorship. Modern scholars are skeptical, since church tradition attempts to link each of the Gospels to one of Jesus' disciples.

Still, Luke has been more widely accepted than the other Gospels, because there doesn't seem to be an obvious motive for linking Luke to this writing. If Luke, then this Gospel was written by a second generation Christian, probably a companion of Paul.

Still, there are problems, because the presentation of Paul in Acts is different from the Paul in the Letters. The Paul in Acts shows no knowledge of Paul's epistles and only slight concerns for Paul's main theology (righteousness of God, freedom from the law, justification by grace). Paul is more conciliatory toward the Judaizer in Acts, but condemns them in Galatians.

In sum, Luke was a well-educated second-generation Christian, either a Hellenistic Jew or a Gentile with deep knowledge of Jewish Scripture.

c. Where?

There are no real clues. However, most scholars think it was written outside of Palestine, since Luke's knowledge of the geography is imprecise (17:11). Luke does not seem to be writing to any particular audience except the "lover of God" (Theophilus).

d. When?

Usually it is dated after 70 CE, because it is thought to be dependent on Mark and because the Gospel may belie knowledge of the destruction of Jerusalem (13:34-35; 19:41-44; 21:20-24). Since Acts shows no knowledge of Paul's letters, which were in circulation and known by Ignatius in 110 CE), Luke was probably written before the end of the first century. Thus, most scholars place Luke-Acts between 80-90 CE.

B. Characteristics of Luke's Gospel

There are at least nine major distinct emphasize in Luke's Gospel that are not found in the other Gospels. Luke emphasizes Jerusalem, Worship, Prayer, Food & Table Fellowship, Oppressed & Marginalized, Women, the Holy Spirit, Promise & Fulfillment, and Salvation..

1. Emphasis on Jerusalem

Jerusalem receives special attention as a geographic focus in Luke. Luke begins with two stories of Jesus visiting Jerusalem as a child (2:22-40; 41-51) and also states that Jesus visited the Temple annually. No other Gospel does that.

The focus on Jerusalem is heightened when Luke has Jesus traveling to Jerusalem for ten chapters (9:51-19:44). In contrast, Mark only narrates the journey to Jerusalem in two chapters (Mk 10:32-11:11). Throughout the journey to Jerusalem, Luke reminds the readers that Jerusalem is the destination *nine times*.¹ When Jesus reaches Jerusalem, he weeps over it, because it has rejected him (19:41-44).

Luke also places all the resurrection appearances of Jesus in and around Jerusalem (24:1-43). In contrast, Mark speaks of resurrection reunions only in Galilee (Mk 14:28; 16:7). The focus on Jerusalem continues in Acts. It is the starting point for the early church's mission (Acts 1:8) and the place for the first ecumenical council (Acts 15).

2. Worship

a. Begins and ends with scenes of worship:

Luke 1:8 Once when he [Zachariah, John the Baptist's father] was serving as priest before God [in the Temple] and his section was on duty, 1:9 he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and offer incense (NRSV).

Luke 24:52 And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; 24:53 and they were continually in the temple blessing God (NRSV).

b. The first two chapters filled with “liturgical material”:

The Magnificat (= "glorifies"): 1:46 And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, 1:47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (Lk 1:46-55).

The Benedictus (= "Praise be"): 1:68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them" (Lk 1:68-79).

Gloria in Excelsis Deo (= "Glory to God in the Highest"): 2:14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" (Lk 2:14).

Nunc Dimittis (= "You now dismiss"): 2:29 "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word"

3. Prayer

Jesus prays more in Luke than any other Gospel. Prayer is mentioned in relation to Jesus' baptism (Lk 3:21) and transfiguration (9:28). Jesus prays before he chooses the twelve (6:12),

¹ Lk 9:51, 53; 13:22, 33; 17:11; 18:31; 19:11, 28, 44.

before he questions the twelve about his identity (9:18), and before he predicts Peter's denial (22:32).

Only Luke's Gospel reports that the disciples ask Jesus how to pray (11:1). Jesus frequently encourages disciples to pray (18:1; 21:36; 22:40). Luke also has three unique parables about prayer—the Friend at Midnight (Lk 11:5-8), the Persistent Widow (Lk 18:1-8), and Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Lk 18:9-14).

4. Emphasis on Food & Table Fellowship

a. Nineteen meals

In Luke, Jesus always appears to be eating. Luke mentions nineteen meals, thirteen of which are unique to Luke.

b. Five parables about banquets

Jesus also talks a lot about eating. He tells five parables about banquets

Lk 14:7-11. 14:7 When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. 14:8 "When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; 14:9 and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, 'Give this person your place,' and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. 14:10 But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. 14:11 For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

Lk 14:12-14. 14:12 He said also to the one who had invited him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. 14:13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. 14:14 And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Lk 14:15-24. 14:15 One of the dinner guests, on hearing this, said to him, "Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" 14:16 Then Jesus said to him, "Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. 14:17 At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for everything is ready now.' 14:18 But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please accept my regrets.' 14:19 Another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my regrets.' 14:20 Another said, 'I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come.' 14:21 So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, 'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.' 14:22 And the slave said, 'Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.' 14:23 Then the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to

come in, so that my house may be filled. 14:24 For I tell you, none of those who were invited will taste my dinner.'"

Lk 15:25-32. 15:25 "Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. 15:26 He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. 15:27 He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' 15:28 Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. 15:29 But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. 15:30 But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' 15:31 Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 15:32 But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"

Lk 16:19-30. 16:19 "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. 16:20 And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, 16:21 who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. 16:22 The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. 16:23 In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. 16:24 He called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.' 16:25 But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. 16:26 Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.' 16:27 He said, 'Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father's house-- 16:28 for I have five brothers--that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.' 16:29 Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.' 16:30 He said, 'No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'

c. Table fellowship & discipleship

Three times Jesus talks about the “proper etiquette” for table fellowship as a way of speaking about discipleship:

Lk 7:44-46. 7:44 Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. 7:45 You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. 7:46 You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment.

Lk 14:7-14 (see above)

Lk 22:27. 22:27 For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

d. Jesus' table fellowship is criticized

In addition, Jesus is criticized for eating too much, drinking too much, and eating with the wrong people

Lk 5:30. The Pharisees and their scribes were complaining to his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

Lk 7:34. The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'

Lk 15:1-2. 15:1 Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. 15:2 And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

e. Why the table fellowship motif?

Why was there so much emphasis on eating and table fellowship?

(1) Symbolized trust and acceptance. It was an expression of intimacy and fellowship; expressed trust and acceptance; refusal to accept a meal symbolized disapproval and rejection.

(2) Symbolized Israel's holiness/purity. The time of table fellowship was the most divided and segregating times of the day. In the first century Judaism, sharp social boundaries were imposed on table fellowship. Table fellowship reflected the purity system of ancient Judaism for observant Jews. Certain foods were pure (*kosher*) and other foods impure (like pork). Purity extended from preparation, serving, and washing of hands before meals. Certain people were pure and included (Israelites who were purified by washing and sacrifice); other people were impure and excluded (unclean people, lepers, the ill and the infirm, menstruating women, Gentiles, etc).

(3) Symbolized Israel's priestly calling. For the Pharisaical sect, table fellowship came to be a way to express purity and tithing. "No fewer than 229 of the 431 rabbinic texts attributed to the Pharisaic schools of Shammai and Hillel pertain to table fellowship."² The Pharisees were thus a "table-fellowship sect" (so Neusner). Pharisees were committed to tithing on all the food and eating every meal in the same degree of purity as the priests in the Temple.³ Meals symbolized Israel's proper present course (holiness curing God's favor) and anticipated its destiny, a kingdom of priests.

² Marcus Borg, *Conflict, Holiness, and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*, 95.

³ Borg, *Conflict*, 95.

In contrast, Jesus and the early Jesus movement were radically inclusive—Jews and Gentiles, pure and impure, weak and powerful, were all invited into the reign of God. Through table fellowship, Jesus enacted the radically inclusive Kingdom of God. Table fellowship became a symbol of the radical inclusivity of the Jesus movement.

5. Emphasis on Oppressed & Marginalized

At one point, Jesus describes his mission as being “to bring good news to the poor” (Lk 4:18). Concern for the poor is demonstrated in many other verses as well, often in ways that imply a corresponding hostility toward the rich.

Lk 1:52 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; 1:53 he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

Lk 6:20 Then he looked up at his disciples and said: “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. 6:21 Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.”

God will provide good things for the hungry, but will send the rich away empty (1:53). The poor are blessed, but the rich are doomed.

Luke also depicts this in parables where the rich are depicted as fools. For example:

Luke 12:16-21. 12:16 Then he told them a parable: “The land of a rich man produced abundantly. 12:17 And he thought to himself, ‘What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?’ 12:18 Then he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 12:19 And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ 12:20 But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ 12:21 So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.” (NRSV Lk 12:16-21).

Still, Luke also includes some rich people, like Zacchaeus (Lk 19:2-6), a despised tax collector. Apparently, Luke is more concerned about including the excluded than he is about criticizing the rich.

6. Emphasizes women

Women are more prominent in Luke than any other Gospel.⁴

a. Infancy narrative Mary is emphasized over Joseph

⁴ Mark Allan Powell, *The Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998) 93.

In the infancy narratives, the role of Mary is emphasized over the role of Joseph (Lk 1:26-56).

b. Only Luke mentions certain women

Luke mentions thirteen women who are not mentioned in the other Gospels, including:

- Elizabeth (1:24-25; 41-55)
- Anna (2:36-38)
- The woman from Nain (7:36-50)
- The homeless women (7:36-50)
- Mary and Martha (10:38-42)—Mary sits at the feet of Jesus (cf. Acts 22:3)
- Several women who supported Jesus (8:1-3)
- The woman with a blood disease (8:43-48)
- The “daughter of Abraham” (13:10-17)
- The poor widow (21:1-4)
- The “daughters of Jerusalem who lament Jesus (23:27-31)
- Women who watched the crucifixion (23:49)
- Women who report the resurrection (23:55-24:11)

c. Luke’s concern for the oppressed included women

Luke’s concern for women is part of his overall concern for the oppressed. Luke is not a feminist by modern standards, but he does recognize that women are disadvantaged in the patriarchal world of the first century. For example, look at:

Luke 11:27-28. 11:27 While he was saying this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you!" 11:28 But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it!"

Jesus radically subverted the first-century value system that kept women marginalized.

In **Luke 11:27**, a woman shouts out to Jesus, **“Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you.”** In the first century, that was high praise for Jesus’ mother. Jesus’ mother was given credit, using the only way the culture had permitted. A woman was valued in relation to other men, her father, husband, or son. She lived her life through them.

In contrast, notice how Jesus undermines patriarchal domination. Jesus responds, **“Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it!”**

(Lk 11:28). Jesus is in effect saying a woman's value is determined by her relationship to God not as a function of her relationship with certain males. The vision and program of Jesus was a domination-free order. No men over women; no rich over poor; no insiders over outsiders.

Although some scholars criticize Luke for including stories of women in a patronizing way—they are needy, have supportive roles, and are not involved in leadership—such judgments are harsh and anachronistic. Luke is not a feminist by modern standards, but given first century realities and opinions about women, Luke's portrayal is very positive, often exceeding the harsh judgments directed at males and male leadership in the ancient world.

7. Emphasis on the Holy Spirit

Luke emphasizes the Holy Spirit in ways that the other Gospels do not. In Luke, people are filled by the Spirit, including Zechariah and Elizabeth (Lk 1:15, 41, 67) and inspired by the Spirit, including Simeon (Lk 2:25-27).

Jesus is conceived by the Spirit (Lk 1:35), anointed by the Spirit (Lk 3:22), led by the Spirit (Lk 4:1), empowered by the Spirit (Lk 4:14), and his ministry is initiated by the Spirit (Lk 4:18).

Luke specifies that God will give “good things” (ἀγαθὰ) to those who ask in prayer (Lk 11:13a), and clearly the “good things” refers to the Holy Spirit (Lk 11:13a). The Matthean parallel mentions “good things” (ἀγαθὰ), but there is no reference to the Holy Spirit (Mt. 7:11).

In Luke's second book, the Holy Spirit becomes the main character: The Holy Spirit is mentioned 41xs (Acts 1:2, 5, 8, 16: 2:4, 33, 38; etc) and the Spirit 16xs (Acts 2:17, 18; 5:9; 6:3, 10, etc.).

In Peter's Pentecost sermon, the words of the Prophet Joel is invoked: “In the last days, God says, ‘I will pour out my Spirit on all people’” (Acts 2:17; Joel 2:28-32). The theme of universal end-time salvation is linked to the coming of the Holy Spirit. The coming of the Spirit marks the dawn of the new age.

8. Emphasis on Promise & Fulfillment

As we saw, Matthew was keen to emphasize that certain events in the life of Jesus fulfill scripture and prophecy. This is true to a lesser degree in Luke's Gospel (see 24:25-27; 45-47).

However, Luke places more emphasis on a general fulfillment of God's overall plan. Luke says that things happen because they are "necessary" (13:33; 24:7). The Greek term *dei* ("it is necessary") occurs forty times in Luke-Acts. Luke emphasis reminds one of the Greek concept of "fate," but necessity is tied to the divine will. For example, developments like the Gentile mission is not unexpected, but part of God's eternal plan. In this way, Luke calls attention to God's faithfulness and reliability (e.g., Luke 2:38; Acts 1:6-7).

God's promises to Israel in the OT are fulfilled by Jesus and the church in Luke-Acts.

9. Emphasis on Salvation

Luke in the only Synoptic Gospel that calls Jesus "Savior" (Luke 2:11; see Jn 4:42). It is the only Gospel that reports Jesus saying he came "to seek and to save the lost" (19:10).

Of course, the other Gospels are concerned with salvation, but they use other terms (e.g., Matthew focus on righteousness; John on eternal life).

Therefore, it is surprising that salvation is not definitively link to Jesus' death as in the other Gospels. In Matthew and Luke, God's saves people through Jesus' death on the cross (cf. Mk. 10:45; Matt 20:28; 26:28), but in Luke Jesus "saves" people throughout his story of Jesus.

"Many scholars have thought that the passion narrative in Luke reads more like report of a pious martyrdom than a theological account of atonement for sin."⁵ For more on Luke's view of salvation, see below.

10. Acts: The sequel to Luke's Gospel

Of course, one of the most striking characteristics of Luke's Gospel is that it is directly connected to Acts, which was written to the same person (Theophilus) by the same author. There are many parallels between Luke and Acts.

C. Major Theological Themes

1. Jesus

Luke is presenting Jesus to a culturally diverse audience, so he tries to present Jesus in ways that might appeal to a broad audience. Scholars have identified a number of images that Luke has applied to Jesus with little concern for the potential confusion that such superimpositions

⁵ Mark Allan Powell, *The Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998) 95.

might produce. Some scholars have written books addressing the coherence of Luke's Christology.⁶

a. Models from the Jewish world

(1) The Prophet

John the Bapt. John the Baptist was a prophet. John and Jesus are presented in parallel. Both had births that were announced by angels, both have miraculous births, both mothers have the Spirit before the birth of their sons (1:35, 41), both have special hymns attached to their births, they are related to each other, and both have ministries that remain or come out of the Judean desert. John's baptismal ministry functions as a catalyst for Jesus' ministry. John was the greatest of prophets until Jesus (3:16; 7:26-28).

The Spirit of the Lord. Jesus claims to have the Spirit of the Lord on him (4:18), which is a classic claim of the prophets of Israel. Jesus compares himself to other prophets, such as Elijah and Elisha (4:24-27). And he links his own death to the death of a prophet (13:33-34).

Moses. In the OT, Moses was presented as a prophet, who predicted the coming of another prophet like him (Deut 18:15). Luke describes Jesus in ways that suggest that Jesus is that prophet. For example, at one point the work of Jesus is described as a new exodus (9:31; NRSV translates *exodus* as "departure").

Jesus the Prophet.

Luke 7:16. A great prophet has appeared among us.

Luke 24:19. The disciples on the road to Emmaus identify Jesus as "a prophet, powerful in word and deed."

Acts 3:22-24. 3:22 Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you from your own people a prophet like me. You must listen to whatever he tells you. 3:23 And it will be that everyone who does not listen to that prophet will be utterly rooted out of the people.' 3:24 And all the prophets, as many as have spoken, from Samuel and those after him, also predicted these days.

Acts 7:37 This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, 'God will raise up a prophet for you from your own people as he raised me up.'

⁶ H. Douglas Buckwalter, *The Character and Purpose of Luke's Christology*, SNTSMS 89 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

(2) The Messiah

Numerous OT texts announce that God would raise up a messiah, an idea king within the line of David. He would restore the fallen fortunes of Israel (2 Sam 7:5-16; Ps 89).

From Paul's letters, we know that Christians identified Jesus with the figure of the Messiah very early after the death of Jesus (e.g., Rom 1:3-4; Phil 2:5-11). After all, Paul makes the title *Christos* (Messiah) part of Jesus' name: *Iēsou Christou*.

Luke is clear that Jesus is the Messiah:

Lk 2:11. Jesus is "Savior ... Christ the Lord".

Lk 9:20-21. 9:20 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "The Messiah of God." 9:21 He sternly ordered and commanded them not to tell anyone,

Lk 24:25-27. Jesus opens the disciples' eyes to Scripture and showed them that the Christ had to suffer and then enter glory. He was speaking about himself .

Lk 24:44-47. ⁴⁴ Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you-- that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶ and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.

(3) Son of Man

The book of Daniel describes a coming heavenly figure as "one like the son of man" (Dan 7:13-14). Both Mark and Q used this designation for Jesus. They describe Jesus as the Son of Man with reference to either his past earthly ministry (Mk 2:10-12) or future second coming (Mk 13:26).

In contrast, Luke emphasizes that Jesus is the Son of Man who is currently "seated at the right hand of the power of God." Compare:

Lk 22:69 But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God."

Acts 7:55-56. 7:55 But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 7:56 "Look," he said, "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"

(4) Suffering Servant

Isaiah spoke of a suffering “servant” through whom God would establish justice (Isa 42:1-4; 29:1-6; 40:4-11; 52:13-53:12).

Isa 42:1-4. 42:1 Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. 42:2 He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; 42:3 a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. 42:4 He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his teaching.

The imagery of the servant songs of Isaiah may have influenced Mark's passion narrative (Mk 10:45), but what Mark has left implicit, Luke has made more explicit. In Luke 22:37, Jesus testifies that “this scripture must be fulfilled in me” and then Jesus quotes Isa 53:12.

Lk 22:37 For I tell you, this scripture must be fulfilled in me, '*And he was counted among the lawless*'; and indeed what is written about me is being fulfilled."

Isa 53:12 Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out himself to death, and *was numbered with the transgressors*; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

And in Acts, Isaiah's prophecies of a suffering servant are the starting point for Philip proclaiming “the good news about Jesus” to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:30-35).

Acts 8:30-35. 8:30 So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 8:31 He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. 8:32 Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this: "*Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth.*" 8:33 In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth." 8:34 The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" 8:35 Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus.

b. Models from the Greco-Roman world

Luke also uses models drawn from the Greco-Roman world. In this way, Luke is very innovative and unique among the NT writers. It appears as though Luke was using imagery for readers that would not have been very familiar with Jewish tradition or scripture.

(1) Philosopher

Luke-Acts is sometimes compared to the work of Diogenes Laertius called *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (early 3rd century CE). The work presents brief biographies of wandering philosophers, many of whom undertook journeys similar to Jesus' journey to Jerusalem (9:51-19:44). The philosophers undertook their journeys as a result of hearing a divine command, and Laertius even regards some of the philosophers as divine in some sense.

The key concern in Laertius' work is to present the philosophers as founders of specific schools which continue to venerate the founder and promote his teachings. For Laertius, philosophy was not so much abstract speculation as it was a way of life imitating the master's lifestyle and teaching. Luke also presents Jesus as one who promoted a specific lifestyle and called his disciples to become like their teacher (Lk 6:40).

If such biographies were popular in Luke's time, then readers of Luke-Acts might have regarded Jesus as one of the wandering Greco-Roman philosophers.

(2) Immortal

In Greco-Roman mythology, the Immortals were divine beings (like Dionysius, Achilles, or Hercules) begotten through the union of a god with a human being. They lived on earth, but performed extraordinary feats that showed their link to the gods.

Although Luke retains Jewish monotheism, he tells the story of Jesus that sounds similar to themes found in mythology of the Immortals.

- The infancy story of Jesus
- Presenting Jesus as the offspring of a human and the Most High
- Showing Jesus performing feats of power
- Jesus ascending to heaven, but intervening for followers on earth

(3) Benefactor

In the Roman world, emperors, other rich public figures, warriors, and athletes were sometimes referred to as Benefactors.⁷ Benefactors were men or women of virtue (*aretē*), that is, people who are identified as having characteristics and deeds of superior excellence. And, most importantly, they contributed to the public welfare by providing funds for building projects and so forth. The verb *euergeteō* ("render beneficent

⁷ F.W. Danker, "Benefactor" in the *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, Eds. Green and McKnight (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992) 58-60.

service”) and the noun *euergētēs* (“benefactor”) are frequently found in documents and inscriptions praising such people.

One inscription calls Nero “the Savior and Benefactor of the world.” Another calls the coming of Augustus the good news for the world that will *benefit* all people.

Luke is the only gospel to present Jesus as “the Savior” and the only gospel to present Jesus as “good news for the whole earth” (Lk 2:10-11, 14). In Acts 10:38, Luke even describes Jesus as one who, literally, “went about as a benefactor” (NRSV has “went about doing good”).

Lk 2:10-11. 2:10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see--I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: 2:11 to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.

Acts 10:38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good [*euergētōn*] and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

Benefactors were frequently described with the phrase “word and deed”. Benefactors were noted for the excellence in word and deed. Tucidides, for example, highlights Pericles with as one who was excellent in word and deed. Similarly, Luke notes that Jesus was a prophet effective in “deed and word” (Lk 24:19) as was Moses (Acts 7:22).

(4) Why would Luke use pagan imagery?

On the one hand, Luke might have been trying to assert the claims of Christianity polemically over against those of Greco-Roman religion and politics. That is, he might have wanted Jesus to be regarded as the true philosopher, Benefactor, Savior, and so-forth.

On the other hand, Luke might have been trying to find common ground with a non-Jewish audience.

2. Salvation

a. Salvation connected to Jesus life, not death

In Matthew and Mark, salvation is linked to Jesus’ death on the cross (Mk. 10:45; Matt 20:28; 26:28) and is therefore something that God gives after Jesus’ death. As Matthew 1:21 says, Jesus “will save his people from their sins.”

In contrast, Luke doesn't connect salvation with Jesus death and thus salvation is not something bestowed after Jesus' death, but Jesus saves people throughout his life. As Luke 2:11 says, "To you is born this day ... a Savior". Jesus is a Savior from the day of his birth. For Luke, *salvation is tied more to Jesus life than his death.*⁸

However, there may be an exception. Strauss writes, "While in general Luke does not stress Jesus' saving significance of the cross, the Last Supper is an exception, as Jesus interprets his coming death as the sacrifice which will establish a new covenant (22:20; cf. Jer. 31:34)."⁹

b. Salvation is liberation

Many people understand salvation as a future event after death where they will receive a favorable review by God at the final judgment and be given life eternal.

In Luke, salvation is both present and future, but places emphasis on the present. Notice Luke's uses of the word "today":

- "Today ... a Savior is born" (2:11)
- "Today ... this scripture is fulfilled" (4:21)
- "Today ... we have seen strange things" (5:26)
- "Today ... I must stay at your house" (19:5)
- "Today ... salvation has come to this house" (19:9)
- "Today ... you will be with me in Paradise" (23:43)

In Luke, salvation means different things to different people:

- To the blind, being able to see (18:43)
- To a leper, being made clean (17:19)
- Peace (2:14)
- Forgiveness (7:48)
- Healing from infirmities (6:10; 8:48)
- Release to the captives, freedom to the oppressed (4:18-19)

When it comes to salvation, Luke makes no distinction between the physical, spiritual, or social aspects of life.

The story of Zacchaeus is telling (Lk 19:1-10). Zacchaeus declared that he will give half his wealth to the poor and repay anyone he is defrauded. Jesus responds by saying that "Today salvation has come to this house" (19:9). As the word "today" indicates, the emphasis is not on

⁸ Mark Allan Powell, *The Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998) 105.

⁹ Mark L. Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus: An Introduction to Jesus and the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007) 227.

some future, otherworldly existence, but on the immediate quality of life here-and-now. Zacchaeus was liberated from slavery to mammon and possessions.

c. How does Jesus “save” after his death?

“If salvation for Luke is the result of a liberating encounter with Jesus, then how can people experience salvation in a world where Jesus is no longer present?”¹⁰

Recent scholarship focuses on Jesus’ ascension as Jesus exaltation or enthronement. Jesus is not absent—except in the relatively insignificant sense of no longer being on earth in bodily form. Standing now at the right hand of God in heaven (Acts 7:56), Jesus continues to bring God’s salvation to people on earth.”¹¹

Acts shows that liberating encounters with Jesus continue even after Jesus death, resurrection, and ascension. In a mysterious way, Jesus continues to come to people (Acts 3:20-21). Peter proclaims to the paralyzed man, “Jesus Christ heals you!” (Acts 9:34). This happens through the Holy Spirit or “the Spirit of Jesus” (Acts 16:70). People continue to be healed (Acts 3:6; 16:18) and forgiven (Acts 10:43) in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:21; 4:12).

Luke seems to have combined a Hebraic and a Hellenistic view of salvation. As the Messiah of Israel, Jesus leads a New Exodus that liberates people from bondage to sin, disease, death, and the devil. As Lord of all nations, Jesus is a supreme benefactor granting divine gifts such as peace, health, and forgiveness.¹²

3. Mission and Expansion

¹⁰ Mark Allan Powell, *The Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998) 106.

¹¹ Mark Allan Powell, *The Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998) 107.

¹² Mark Allan Powell, *The Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998) 107.