

# The Gospel of Luke 1. The Cultural Context of Luke. The World of the New Testament

Notes by Linda Monyak. Last update Nov. 12, 2000  
A copy of these notes in the form of the handout passed out at the meeting can be downloaded from the Download Page.

## Topics

(These topics and the main source of the material for these notes is **The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation**. Luke T. Johnson. Fortress, 1986)

1. Introductory Matters
2. Symbolic World of the New Testament
3. Judaism in Palestine
4. Diaspora Judaism

## 1. Introductory Matters

1.1. Attempt to answer how the canon came to take the shape that it has

1.2. Understands Bible as human creation that expresses man's search for meaning

1.3. Bible a product of 1st century Mediterranean world

1.4. Gives precedence to the text in its current canonical form

1.5. Uses historical-critical methods, but rejects historical model

- 1.5.1. Does not recognize unique place of canonical texts
- 1.5.2. Views canonical texts solely as historical sources, not as literary material
- 1.5.3. Fails to deal with canonical texts as religious documents per se

1.6. Johnson's model: Experience - Interpretation Model

- 1.6.1. Recognizes canonical texts as expression of a religious community
- 1.6.2. Takes into account anthropological,

historical, and literary aspects of texts

- 1.6.3. Would recognize distinctive characteristics of each work within canonical harmony
- 1.6.4. Takes into account religious experience found within its social setting

1.7. Sociological analysis recognizes that people are part of social systems

- 1.7.1. Aids in analysis of conflict between 2 symbolic worlds
  - 1.7.1.1. Close up
  - 1.7.1.2. Communicate
  - 1.7.1.3. Convert
- 1.7.2. Deviants may be either skeptics or prophetic voices

## 2. Symbolic World of the New Testament

2.1. Roman Rule and Hellenistic Culture

- 2.1.1. Consisted of the territories surrounding the Mediterranean Sea
- 2.1.2. Temporally lasted from 356 BCE to the mid-second century AD
- 2.1.3. Despite Roman rule, the culture was Greek with the addition of the pax Romana
- 2.1.4. Hellenization (of Alexander the Great) not only military conquest, but a cultural transformation
  - 2.1.4.1. Imported poets, philosophers & historians
  - 2.1.4.2. Encouraged intermarriage of soldiers with native population
  - 2.1.4.3. Established Greek city-states
  - 2.1.4.4. Made Greek the world language
  - 2.1.4.5. Merged local gods with the Greek gods
- 2.1.5. Impact on Jewish culture seen in the **Septuagint** (LXX), translated in Alexandria in the 2nd century BCE
- 2.1.6. Syncretism led to suggestion that gods might be universal and not tied to specific locale
  - 2.1.6.1. Began to think of world as governed by fate in place of gods
  - 2.1.6.2. Paved way for consideration of monotheism
- 2.1.7. Hellenization led to consideration of the individual

## 2.2. Roman Rule

- 2.2.1. Used force when required to maintain the peace, but also extended the benefits of Roman citizenship to an increasing circle
- 2.2.2. Growth of Empire
  - 2.2.2.1. Led to dramatic increase in slaves and immigrants displaced by war
  - 2.2.2.2. Increased dependence on Egypt to feed Rome
  - 2.2.2.3. Increased taxation - up to ¼ of the harvest
- 2.2.3. Network of Roman roads meant more efficient transportation, increased commerce, and a reliable postal service
- 2.2.4. Life for most though was a constant struggle

## 2.3. The Pagan World

- 2.3.1. Our view of pagan depravity derived from ancient moralists as well as Christian scripture
- 2.3.2. Public standards of morality actually quite high
- 2.3.3. Popular religion found expression in magic, astrology, protective amulets

## 2.4. Hellenistic Religion

- 2.4.1. Yearned for a transformative religious experience
- 2.4.2. Fascinated by prophecy
  - 2.4.2.1. Classical
  - 2.4.2.2. Mantic
- 2.4.3. Sought healing from wandering charismatics as well as Serapis and Asklepios
- 2.4.4. Mystery cults grew in popularity as they provided divine revelation, transformation, and community
- 2.4.5. Life viewed as alienated from god through its corporeal existence
  - 2.4.5.1. Remedy to acquire special knowledge - *gnosis*

## 2.5. Hellenistic Philosophy

- 2.5.1. Emphasis had shifted from acquisition of knowledge to living well
- 2.5.2. **Stoicism**
  - 2.5.2.1. Can't control fate, chance, state power
  - 2.5.2.2. So focus on controlling one's mind and desires

## ■ 2.5.3. Cynicism

- 2.5.3.1. Characterized perfection as freedom and free speech
- 2.5.3.2. Attracted philosophers who were less ambitious
- 2.5.4. Living well connected to virtue - drew up tables of household ethics
- 2.5.5. Philosophy was the cure for a spiritual illness
- 2.5.6. Religious terminology such as salvation and conversion were a part of the philosophical vocabulary
- 2.5.7. **Pythagoreans and Epicureans**
  - 2.5.7.1. Organized as communities of spiritual friends
  - 2.5.7.2. Founders were divine
  - 2.5.7.3. Encouraged fellow communities through letters
- 2.5.8. Most associations tolerated by Rome unless they seemed likely to rebel

## 2.6. Reinterpretation of Symbols

- 2.6.1. Time of religious & philosophical ferment
- 2.6.2. Led to reinterpretation of old symbols rather than invention of new ones
- 2.6.3. Antiquity was the gold standard
- 2.6.4. Culture and virtue intertwined and best expressed in the poetry of **Homer**
  - 2.6.4.1. Actions of the gods now viewed as immoral
  - 2.6.4.2. Even **Plato** mistrusted the tales and found no place for poetry in the ideal world
  - 2.6.4.3. Stoics turned to allegory as means to preserve the usefulness of Homer
- 2.6.5. Hellenistic Judaism relied heavily on allegory for scriptural interpretation
- 2.6.6. "Greek culture was built on the imitation of models from the past"
- 2.6.7. Imitation was also the way to a virtuous life
- 2.6.8. Allegorical reinterpretation provided a means for the heroes of the past (Heracles) to continue as role models (as a philosopher who could find happiness even apart from his family)
- 2.6.9. Philosophers such as **Socrates & Diogenes** also functioned as models of virtue

## 3. Judaism in Palestine

3.1. Turning point for Judaism was destruction of temple in 70 AD when Pharisees came to define Judaism in contrast to its previous diversity

3.2. Torah (instruction, mitzvah or commandment) provided identity to Jews as people and a cult

3.3. A faithful God who acted with *hesed* (loving kindness) required a people of similar qualities (Ex 34:6)

3.4. Jews shared the symbols of the Torah and with it their status as chosen

3.5. Hellenistic Jews combined these shared symbols with apocalyptic thought, rabbinic teaching, legalism, mysticism, messianism, liturgy to create a dazzling array of Judaisms

### 3.6. Political Context

- 3.6.1. Characteristics Ever-present Hellenistic culture
  - 3.6.1.1. Subjects of Greek followed by Roman rule
  - 3.6.1.2. Religious realities
    - 3.6.1.2.1.1. God's promise to Abraham equated with possession of land (Gen 50:24)
    - 3.6.1.2.1.2. God's rule active in Davidic line (2 Sam 7:11-16)
    - 3.6.1.2.1.3. God's presence realized in the temple (1 Kings 8:22-53)
- 3.6.2. Hellenistic Jews were not only a small, but brave people battling tyrants, but also a deeply divided people
- 3.6.3. Historical landmarks
  - 3.6.3.1. Babylonian exile (586 BCE)
  - 3.6.3.2. Return from exile (538 BCE)
  - 3.6.3.3. Priesthood purchased during Seleucid and Ptolemaic division
  - 3.6.3.4. Imposed idolatry of **Antiochus IV Epiphanes** with statue of Zeus in temple
  - 3.6.3.5. Successful rebellion of **Mattathias** with Rome's help
  - 3.6.3.6. Restoration of kingdom (**Hasmonean dynasty**) and priesthood (143-37BCE)

- 3.6.3.6. Restoration of kingdom (**Hasmonean dynasty**) and priesthood (143-37BCE)
- 3.6.3.7. Restoration of order in Judea by **Pompey** (63 BCE)
- 3.6.3.8. Jewish War (**Masada**) culminating in destruction of Jerusalem (66-70 AD)
- 3.6.4. Impact of Hellenism
  - 3.6.4.1. 16 Hellenistic cities
  - 3.6.4.2. Jewish upper classes demand gymnasium in Jerusalem
  - 3.6.4.3. **Aristotle's** encounter with a Jew who "had the soul of a Greek"
  - 3.6.4.4. Stoicism's **Zeno** born in Palestine
  - 3.6.4.5. **Hillel's** 7 rules of midrash based on Greek logic
- 3.6.5. Jewish identity meant worship of only 1 God and following the way of Torah'
- 3.6.6. Jews divided over whether to accept the limited Hasmonean rule
- 3.6.7. Theological differences implied political differences
  - 3.6.7.1. **Sadducees** represented the wealthy who cooperated with Rome
  - 3.6.7.2. **Pharisees** were the urbane, apolitical middle class
  - 3.6.7.3. **Essenes** demanded total separation for purity
- 3.6.8. Period characterized by lively internal theological debate
  - 3.6.8.1. **Messianism** as answer to Jewish instability
  - 3.6.8.2. Link between martyrdom for "sanctification of the Name" and resurrection of the righteous
  - 3.6.8.3. Concept of resurrection calls into question the nature of God's people and emphasizes individual responsibility (Ez 18:1-32)
  - 3.6.8.4. Role of temple as physical reality vs symbol embodied in the people themselves

### 3.7. Apocalyptic Literature

- 3.7.1. Best exemplified by Daniel, written to counter the persecution of **Antiochus IV Epiphanes** (165 BCE)
- 3.7.2. Affirms that God controls history despite appearances to the contrary
- 3.7.3. Utilizes code shared by writer and readers based in symbols of Torah
- 3.7.4. Counters divisive elements within the faith community as well as external persecution
- 3.7.5. Response to the confrontation between Torah (Deut 30:1-20) and reality of persecution

- 3.7.5.1. All this I have spoken before thee, O Lord, because thou hast said that for our sakes thou hast created this world. But as for the other nations, which are descended from Adam, thou hast said that they are nothing, and that they are like unto spittle; and thou hast likened the abundance of them to a drop in a bucket. And now, O Lord, behold these nations which are reputed as nothing, lord it over us and crush us. But we, they people, whom thou hast called thy first-born, thy only begotten, thy beloved, are given up into their hands. If the world has indeed been created for our sakes, why do we not enter into possession of our world? How long shall this endure? 4 Ezra 6:55-59
- 3.7.6. Sees an end to the current evil age when God intervenes and vindicates the righteous (saves both monotheism and the beneficence of God)
- 3.7.7. Reimagined the symbols of Torah and served in turn as the symbolic base for followers of Jesus

### 3.8. Rabbinic Tradition

- 3.8.1. Pharisees only Jewish sect to survive after 70 AD
- 3.8.2. Tradition was the core of the movement
- 3.8.3. Oral origins culminated in 2 written traditions
  - 3.8.3.1. Palestinian Talmud (350 CE)
  - 3.8.3.2. Babylonian Talmud (450 CE)
- 3.8.4. **Josephus** describes the Pharisees as Jewish cousins of the Stoics
- 3.8.5. Pharisees began with assumption that Torah was the way of life and proceeded to interpret its application for Jews of their day and time
- 3.8.6. **Midrash** allowed Jews to walk (*halakah*) in the way of Torah
- 3.8.7. Midrash on non-legal texts yielded *hagadah* (narrative)
- 3.8.8. God's Presence no longer dwelt in the temple but among his people when they study Torah
  - 3.8.8.1. If two sit together and words of Torah are between them, the Shekinah rests between them...and even if one sits and occupies himself with Torah, the Holy One, blessed be He, fixes for him a reward. Pirke Aboth 3.3
- 3.8.9. "Torah ... Is God's eternal blueprint for creation and for righteous human behavior." (cf
- 3.8.10. Humans will naturally fall short of the Torah way - the appropriate response is repentance not despair
  - 3.8.10.1. Repent one day before your death...let him repent today lest he die on the morrow; let him repent on the morrow lest he die the day after; and thus all his days will be spent in repentance. Rabbi Eliezer, Aboth de Rabbi Nathan 15

### 3.9. Jewish Worship

- 3.9.1. Occurred in temple, synagogue and home
- 3.9.2. Synagogues found in small villages as well as Jerusalem, including the temple precincts
- 3.9.3. Torah the focal point of worship in synagogue
- 3.9.4. Liturgy of synagogue included scripture readings, midrashic homily, prayers
- 3.9.5. Jewish prayers based on blessing formula exhibited in Psalm 117
- 3.9.6. Torah reading done in Hebrew and translated into Aramaic with a heavy dose of **midrash** for the benefit of the hearers
  - 3.9.6.1. **Targums** were those remembered and recorded
  - 3.9.6.2. Compare Gen 49:
    - 3.9.6.2.1. And Jacob called his sons and said to them: "Purify yourself from uncleanness, and I will show you the mysteries which are hidden, the appointed times which are concealed, what the recompense of reward for the just, the retribution in store for the wicked, and the joys of Eden are." The twelve tribes gathered together around the bed of gold on which he lay. And after the shekinah of the Lord was revealed, the determined time in which the King Messiah is to come was hidden from him. Aramaic Targum Pseudo-Jonathan
  - 3.9.6.3. Targums were heard as scripture by Jews of Jesus' time
- 3.9.7. Earliest description of synagogue service: Luke 4:16-30
- 3.9.8. Jewish meals were framed by blessings before and after
  - 3.9.8.1. Passover seder the central sacred meal
  - 3.9.8.2. Passover meal serves to both remember and to participate in the Exodus
- 3.9.9. **Qumran**
  - 3.9.9.1. **Dead Sea Scrolls** found at **Qumran**

- 3.9.9.2. Possible that **John the Baptist** may have had ties to Qumran, but no evidence links Jesus or early Christians with this community
- 3.9.9.3. Qumran library contains:
  - 3.9.9.3.1. Apocalyptic works
  - 3.9.9.3.2. Commentaries
  - 3.9.9.3.3. Liturgical documents
  - 3.9.9.3.4. Fragments of Merkabah mysticism
- 3.9.9.4. Dating of Dead Sea Scrolls containing dualistic thought forced scholars to revise the date and impact of outside thought on Christian texts such as John
- 3.9.9.5. Combination of eschatological outlook with high degree of organization in Qumran calls into question previous scholarship theorizing that Christian organizational structure replaced waning hopes for an early return of Jesus
- 3.9.9.6. Shares some characteristics with early church
  - 3.9.9.6.1. Understood themselves to be separate from mainstream Judaism
  - 3.9.9.6.2. Found their identity in a unique interpretation of Hebrew scripture
- 3.9.9.7. Used their experience to interpret scripture and nourish their identity as the true Israel

- 4.4.3. Egyptian Jewish community numbered a million according to Philo
- 4.4.4. Diaspora Jews such as Philo were prominent members of their community and happy to live outside the crowded, impoverished conditions of Palestine
- 4.4.5. Synagogues formed the foundation of Jewish identity in the Diaspora and later were the springboard for Christian mission
  - 4.4.5.1. Prepared the Gentile world for later encounters with monotheism, high moral standards of Torah, and concept of a chosen people
- 4.4.6. Diaspora Jews were freer to adopt certain aspects of Hellenistic culture without sacrificing their Jewish identity
- 4.4.7. Rights and privileges
  - 4.4.7.1. Autonomy within the city-state to live within their own customs
  - 4.4.7.2. Some were Roman citizens
  - 4.4.7.3. Some were aliens with special status allowing them to adhere to their own customs and worship
  - 4.4.7.4. Exempt from certain idol worship implied from protests when suspended
  - 4.4.7.5. Granted freedom to associate in synagogues
  - 4.4.7.6. Given Sabbath off work for worship
  - 4.4.7.7. Exempt from military duty
  - 4.4.7.8. Temple tax collected and transported to Jerusalem by Roman authorities

## 4. Diaspora Judaism

### 4.1. Most Jews lived outside Palestine ( 5 million out of a total of 7 million Jews)

### 4.2. Most info on diaspora Jews comes from Alexandria

### 4.3. Diaspora Jews forced to deal with cultural conflicts in unique ways

### 4.4. Extent and Importance of Diaspora Judaism

- 4.4.1. Need to maintain Jewish identity in foreign land pre-dates **Babylonian exile** (2 Sam 8:6, I Kings 5:14)
- 4.4.2. Mesopotamian Jews came to be a center

### 4.5. Religious and Cultural Tensions of Diaspora Life

- 4.5.1. Continued to feel the pull of assimilation
- 4.5.2. Lost the ability to communicate in Hebrew
- 4.5.3. Had used **LXX (Septuagint)** as scripture for 200 years in time of **Philo**
- 4.5.4. Religious language and symbols underwent subtle transformation
  - 4.5.4.1. Glory in Hebrew carries association of weight & presence; in Greek is associated with appearance and radiance
  - 4.5.4.2. Torah in Hebrew translated as nomos or law in Greek
- 4.5.5. Greek education would be regarded as normal
- 4.5.6. Biblical heroes would be transformed into philosophers and allegorical methods would be applied to Torah study

- 4.5.7. Would still remain separated from their Greek neighbors
  - 4.5.7.1. Pilgrimages to Jerusalem
  - 4.5.7.2. Adherence to Torah
- 4.5.8. Gentile view of Jews was mixed
  - 4.5.8.1. Well-educated saw Judaism as an ancient and praiseworthy tradition
  - 4.5.8.2. Special privileges of the Jews also led to resentment and charge of hatred of mankind
- 4.5.9. Anti-Semitism identifiable in Alexandria of Ptolemy II
  - 4.5.9.1. Egyptian priest circulated charges that Jews were atheists and captured Gentiles to kill and eat

#### Caligula

- 4.7.6. Interpreted Judaism to the Hellenistic world
- 4.7.7. Despite his careful study of Torah, Philo demonstrates a unique view of Torah as compared to Palestinian Jews
  - 4.7.7.1. No apocalyptic
  - 4.7.7.2. No expectation of messiah
  - 4.7.7.3. No martyrdom
  - 4.7.7.4. No resurrection, instead have immortality

### 4.6. Response of Jewish Apologetic

- 4.6.1. 3 possible responses to assimilation pressures
  - 4.6.1.1. Assimilate
  - 4.6.1.2. Separate
  - 4.6.1.3. Defend and explain - apologetic
- 4.6.2. Apologetic assumes a certain openness to outsiders and a willingness to communicate in a rational manner
- 4.6.3. Requires the use of the symbols of the dominant group in order to communicate ( in Alexandria, this meant the use of Greek wisdom)
- 4.6.4. Themes of Jewish Apologetic
  - 4.6.4.1. Antiquity (Moses as the founder of Greek culture)
  - 4.6.4.2. Beauty and purity of synagogue worship
  - 4.6.4.3. Philanthropic bent of Torah counters charge of misanthropy
- 4.6.5. Casting biblical heroes as wise men reflects not so much a deliberate distortion of the truth in order to communicate so much as the immersion of the Diaspora Jew in the Hellenistic culture

### 4.7. Philo of Alexandria (died in 50 CE)

- 4.7.1. Most prominent Diaspora Jew next to Paul
- 4.7.2. Example a single individual who was able to maintain contradictory views just as Paul appears to do
- 4.7.3. Used allegory to interpret Torah
- 4.7.4. Makes mystical connections with Torah that share some similarities to mystery religions
- 4.7.5. Represented the Jewish community before

# The Gospel of Luke 2. The Cultural Context of Luke. The Early Christian Experience

Notes by Linda Monyak. Last update Nov. 19, 2000  
A copy of these notes in the form of the handout passed out at the meeting can be downloaded from the Download Page.

## Topics

(These topics and the main source of the material for these notes is **The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation.** Luke T. Johnson. Fortress, 1986)

### 1. Claims of the First Christians

- 1.1. Introductory Matters
- 1.2. Christianity from the Outside
- 1.3. Claims of the Christians

### 2. The Resurrection Faith

- 2.1. Fundamental conviction of early Christian faith
- 2.2. The Resurrection Experience

### 3. Jesus in the Memory of the Church

- 3.1. Anamnesis
- 3.2. Social Contexts of Tradition
- 3.3. Preaching
- 3.4. Worship
- 3.5. Teaching for the Common Life
- 3.6. Forms of Memory
- 3.7. Memory of Jesus' Death

## 1. Claims of the First Christians

### 1.1. Introductory Matters

1.1.1. Christian success due to experience of power, not to purer ethics, profundity, or ancient beginnings

1.1.2. Christian insiders see themselves as liberationist; outsiders view them as terrorists

### 1.2. Christianity from the Outside

1.2.1. Largely ignored by contemporaneous writers due to its insignificance

1.2.2. Few references to Jesus in Talmud understandable due to New Testament writings

1.2.3. Roman references sometimes appear not to distinguish between Christians and Jews

"Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of **Chrestus**, he expelled them from Rome." *Life of Claudius* by **Suetonius**

1.2.4. Tacitus knows Christians are a distinct group

"**Nero** fastened the guilt and afflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called **Christians** by the populace. **Christus**, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of **Tiberius** at the hands of one of our procurators, **Pontius Pilate**, and a deadly superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out, not only in **Judaea**, the first source of the evil, but also in the city, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world meet and become popular." *Annals*

1.2.5. Pliny the Younger, a pagan governor of Bithynia was concerned with the rapid growth of Christianity

After imprisoning some Christians, Pliny wrote to Trajan: "They maintained, moreover, that the amount of their fault or error had been this, that it was their habit on a fixed day to assemble before daylight and recite by turns a form of words to Christ as to a god; and that they bound themselves with an oath, not for any crime, but not to commit theft or robbery or adultery, not to break their word, and not to deny a deposit when demanded. After this was done, it was their custom to depart, and to meet again to take food, but ordinary and harmless food . . . I discovered nothing else than a perverse and extravagant superstition." *Letter to Trajan*

### **1.2.6. Hellenistic satirist Lucian of Samosata considers Christians to be very credulous; in the following quote Peregrinus is a Cynic philosopher who dupes a group of Christians**

"It was then he learned the wondrous lore of the Christians by associating with their priests and scribes in Palestine. And-how else could it be-in a trice he made them all look like children; for he was prophet, cult leader, head of the synagogue, and everything, all by himself. He interpreted and explained some of their books, and even composed many, and they revered him as a god, made use of him as a lawgiver, and set him down as a protector, next after that other, to be sure, whom they still worship, the man who was crucified in Palestine because he introduced this new cult into the world.

"Then at length Peregrinus was apprehended for this and thrown into prison, which itself gave him no little reputation as an asset in his future career and the charlatanism and notoriety-seeking that he was enamoured of. Well, when he had been imprisoned, the Christians, regarding the incident as a calamity, left nothing undone in the effort to rescue him. Then, as this was impossible, every other form of attention was shown him, not in any casual way, but with assiduity;...people even came from the cities of Asia, sent by the Christians at their common expense, to succor and defend and encourage the hero. They show incredible speed whenever any such public action is undertaken; for in no time at all, they lavish their all. So it was, then, in the case of Peregrinus; much money came to him from them by reason of his imprisonment, and he procured not a little revenue from it. The poor wretches have convinced themselves, first and foremost, that they are going to be immortal and live for all time, in consequence of which they despise death, and even willingly give themselves into custody, most of them. Furthermore their first lawgiver persuaded them that they are all brothers of one another after they transgressed once for all by denying the Greek gods and by worshipping the crucified sophist himself and living under his laws. Therefore they despise all things indiscriminately and consider them common property, receiving such doctrines traditionally and without any definite evidence. So if any charlatan and trickster able to profit by occasions comes among them, he quickly acquires sudden wealth by

imposing on simple folk." *Passing of Peregrinus*

### **1.2.7. Even after most of the NT writings were in circulation, most outsiders viewed Christians with contempt**

## **1.3. Claims of the Christians**

### **1.3.1. Christians did make some astounding claims (1 Cor. 3:22, 6:2-3, Eph. 3:9-10, 1 John 5:4-5, Rev. 11:15)**

### **1.3.2. These claims were made prior to outside notice of the Christian sect**

### **1.3.3. Christian claims were based on their experience**

- With "powers and principalities" (1 Cor. 2:6-10, 1 Pet. 3:21-22)
- With respect to salvation (Rom. 1:16, 1 Cor. 1:18)
- Of liberation (Gal. 5:1, 2 Cor.3:17)
- Of peace (Rom. 5:1, Col. 3:15)
- Of joy (Acts 13:52, 1 Pet. 4:13)

### **1.3.4. Primary Christian experience is one of power expressed with a variety of terms**

- Authority or **exousia** (John 1:12, 2 Cor. 10:8)
- Energy or **energeia** (Eph. 3:20-21, Col. 1:29)
- Power or **dynamis** (Rom. 15:13, 1 Cor. 6:14)

### **1.3.5. Power was visible in "signs and wonders" (Acts 4:30), proclamation of "good news" (1 Cor. 2:4-5), spiritual transformation (Rom. 12:2)**

### **1.3.6. Source of power is God (Jas. 4:12)**

### **1.3.7. Experience of power so new that it was viewed as radical new creation (2 Cor. 5:17)**

### **1.3.8. Christian wisdom was a gift of revelation, not the result of strenuous study (Eph. 1:8)**

**1.3.9. Christians claimed hopes for an eschatological event controlled by God, tempered by experience in the present of righteousness (Rom. 3:21), freedom from law (Rom. 7:6) and sin (Rom. 8:1), revelation (Rom. 16:26), salvation (2 Cor. 6:2)**

## **2. The Resurrection Faith**

### **2.1. Fundamental conviction of early Christian faith**

**2.1.1. The fundamental conviction of early Christian faith was "Jesus is raised" (1 Thess. 1:9-10, 4:14, 1 Cor. 15:3-8)**

### **2.2. The Resurrection Experience**

**2.2.1. "Christianity is a religion of personal encounter with the Other...in the risen Jesus."**

**2.2.2. Paul speaks of appearances or visions of a resurrected Jesus (Gal 1:15-16, 2 Cor. 12:1-5)**

- Encounters with a "transcendent, commanding presence"
- Jesus experienced as present in the Christian community (Acts 9:5)

**2.2.3. Two types resurrection accounts**

- Empty-tomb stories (Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-11)
  - Response to charges of hoax
- Appearance stories (Mark 9:9-20, Luke 24:13-49)
  - Emphasize bodily appearance (Luke 24:39-43)
  - Stress lack of control by disciples as evidenced by their fear

**2.2.4. Older scholarship views of resurrection**

- A psychological struggle (by Mary Magdalene) that led not to belief but to mission
- "Jesus did not rise on Easter, but faith did" A. Loisy

### **2.2.5. Problems with these views**

- Don't know Mary Magdalene psychological status
- Disciples do not demonstrate a strong faith upon Jesus' death, but to the contrary run away in fear

**2.2.6. "The resurrection experience that gave birth to the Christian movement was the experience of the continuing presence of a personal, transcendent, and transforming power within the community." (John 20:20-23)**

**2.2.7. "The possession of the Holy Spirit is the experiential correlative to the confession that Jesus is Lord." (Acts 2:32-36)**

**2.2.8. Jesus presence experienced through the Holy Spirit (Gal. 4:6) Who raised Jesus (Rom. 8:11)**

**2.2.9. Resurrection faith characterized by conviction that Jesus lived, could be experienced as present in power, and deserved the title Lord**

**2.2.10. Jewish Christians had to deal with the dissonance that Jesus died the death of a sinner and was under a curse from God (Deut. 21:23, Gal. 3:13)**

## **3. Jesus in the Memory of the Church**

### **3.1. Anamnesis**

**3.1.1. = ("a recollection of the past that enlivens and empowers the present")**

**3.1.2. Best example of this found in the celebration of communion (Luke 22:19, 1 Cor. 11:24-25)**

**3.1.3. Memory of the church colored by the resurrection experience**

## 3.2. Social Contexts of Tradition

3.2.1. Author of Luke/Acts sees orderly spread of Christianity from Jerusalem outward, beginning with proclamation in the synagogues, then, after rejection to the Gentiles (Acts 1:8, 13:46-47)

3.2.2. Luke does not enlighten us about the Christian community of Galilee, Egypt or Syria, but concentrates on cities of the Mediterranean Roman Empire

3.2.3. Luke portrays Christianity spreading

- Through establishment of churches
- Rapid expansion over a large geographic area

3.2.4. Quick spread of Christianity means it had to endure differing circumstances as well as linguistic issues since many of Jesus words appear to have Aramaic origins

3.2.5. Other NT evidence suggests that the Christian community did not have such peaceful origins and had some growing pains to endure due to changing circumstances and rapid spread

- Addressed by preaching, worship and teaching

## 3.3. Preaching

3.3.1. Evidence of early Christian preaching found in the letters (Gal. 4:13, Col. 1:3-7, 1 Thess. 1:5, Heb. 2:1-4, Jas. 1:21, 1 Pet. 1:22-25)

3.3.2. Christian belief was initiated through preaching (Acts 2:37, Gal. 3:2-5)

3.3.3. Central features of early Christian preaching (Acts 2:16-36, 3:12-26, 10:34-43, 13:16-41, 17:22-31)

- Prophecy fulfilled in Jesus
- Jesus, son of David, died, was raised by God
- God had validated Jesus' life through the Holy Spirit
- Jesus would return
- Call for repentance

3.3.4. Although Luke records these sermons for his own purposes, the similarities may also indicate a common tradition

3.3.5. Preaching occurred in synagogues (Acts 13:13-16, 14:1)

3.3.6. Proclamation of a crucified messiah would require early Christians to answer certain questions

## 3.4. Worship

3.4.1. Jesus' ministry had ties to the temple in Jerusalem (Mark 11:15-18, 27) and his followers continued to worship in the temple after his death and resurrection (Acts 2:46)

3.4.2. Jewish Christians continued to worship in the synagogues (Mark 13:9, Acts 18:7-17) as shown by the necessity to throw the Christians out

3.4.3. Synagogue worship ceased in 85 CE with the institution of the *birkat ha minim*

3.4.4. Household the predominant place for early Christian worship (Acts 16:32)

3.4.5. House as setting for worship probably led to Christian identification as the "household of God" (1 Tim. 3:15)

3.4.6. Primary rituals of early church were baptism and observance of the Lord's Supper

**3.4.7. Baptism allowed for reinterpretation of the Hebrew bible (1 Cor. 10:1-5, 1 Pet. 3:20-21)**

**3.4.8. Celebration of communal meals important in early worship (Acts 2:46)**

**3.4.9. Lord's Supper recalls and makes Jesus present to the observers as the Passover meal meant that all Jews were slaves whom God had liberated from Egypt**

**3.4.10. Traditional Jewish prayer form modified from "Blessed by the Lord" to "Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 15:6)**

**3.4.11. Aramaic origins of some prayer forms preserved in the use of**

■ **Maranatha** or Our Lord, come (1 Cor. 16:22)

■ **Abba** or daddy (Gal. 4:6)

**3.4.12. Use of Hebrew *amen* in prayers**

**3.4.13. Texts of some early Christian hymns preserved in NT (Col. 1:15-20, 1 Tim. 3:16, 1 Pet. 1:22-25, 3:18, 22, Phil. 2:6-11)**

**3.4.14. Reading of scripture assumed due to prevalence in synagogue worship (1 Tim. 4:13)**

### **3.5. Teaching for the Common Life**

**3.5.1. Areas of concern for early Christians included**

■ True vs. false prophets (1 Cor. 14:29)

■ Manifestations of the Spirit (Gal. 5:13-26)

**3.5.2. Midrash and diatribe are suggested in NT writings**

**3.5.3. Women were teaching since Paul writes against the practice (1 Cor. 14:34-36)**

**3.5.4. Paul, at least, distinguishes between his own teaching and that inspired by God (1 Cor. 7:8,10)**

### **3.6. Forms of Memory**

**3.6.1. Oral tradition**

■ Specifics of time and place are lost

■ Punch line remembered more clearly than setting

■ Stories become shorter, more formulaic, more focused

**3.6.2. Controversy stories**

■ Jesus or disciples do something

■ Opponents challenge them

■ Jesus makes a profound statement

**3.6.3. Healings**

■ Sickness is noticed

■ Jesus acts

■ Result

■ Bystanders react

**3.6.4. Exorcisms**

■ Possession is noticed

■ Jesus engages spirits in conversation

■ Jesus commands the spirit(s) to depart

■ Departure of spirit signified by physical sign

■ Exorcised person restored

■ Bystanders react

### **3.7. Memory of Jesus' Death**

**3.7.1. That Jesus' death required interpretation is evidenced by**

■ Passion accounts in all 4 gospels

■ Jesus' suffering carefully prepared for before the crucifixion

**3.7.2. Kerygmatic tradition (1 Cor.15:3-8)**

**3.7.3. 1 Cor. 1:23 demonstrates the unexpected and controversial nature of the crucifixion**

**3.7.4. Scriptures that proved helpful to early Christians include: Ps. 110:1, Zech. 9:9, Ps. 118:22, Ps. 69 & 22**

**3.7.5. Jesus' suffering viewed as ordained by God (Luke 9:22)**

**3.7.6. Jesus' last words derived from Torah**

- Mark 15:23 = Ps. 69:21
- Mark 15:24 = Ps. 22:18
- Mark 15:29 = Pss. 22:7, 209:25
- Mark 15:31 = Ps. 22:8
- Mark 15:34 = Ps. 22:1
- Mark 15:36 = Ps. 69:21

# The Gospel of Luke 3, 4 & 5. An Overview of the Gospel

Notes by Linda Monyak. Last Update December 3, 2000

## Topics

1. Luke, the historian
2. Luke, the theologian
3. Luke, the gospel
  - 3.1. Introduction
  - 3.2. Circumstances of Composition
  - 3.3. Genre and Purpose
  - 3.4. Literary Aspects of Luke-Acts
    - 3.4.1. Style
    - 3.4.2. Biblical imitation
    - 3.4.3. Use of narrative devices esp. In Acts
    - 3.4.4. Literary Structure
    - 3.4.5. Prophetic Structure
  - 3.5. The Prophet and the People
    - 3.5.1. The Infancy Account
    - 3.5.2. The Prophetic Messiah
    - 3.5.3. Formation of the People
    - 3.5.4. The Passion Narrative
    - 3.5.5. Resurrection and Ascension

## 1. Luke, the historian

(Reference: Eckhard Plumacher in Anchor Bible Dictionary)

- 1.1. Follows the model of **Thucydides**, making similar claims (Luke 1:3)
- 1.2. Luke's **prologue** appears to be based on the instructions **Thucydides** gave on writing history
- 1.3. "We" passages often recount travels by sea because a trustworthy historian must be well-traveled (Acts 16:10-17, 20:5-8, 21:1-18)
- 1.4. **Speeches** in Acts, as in other ancient histories, don't necessarily match their context
  - Purpose of speech is to interpret the surrounding event
- 1.5. Action develops as a sequential series of events
- 1.6. Luke writes in a specific **style of Hellenistic historiography**, the tragedy/pathos-centered historiography
  - Makes use of highly dramatic events to reach the reader
- 1.7. Answers specific problems of the early Christians
  - Delay of the *parousia*, the second coming
  - Predominantly Gentile church that grew out of Jewish origins

## 2. Luke, the theologian

(Reference: I. Howard Marshall in Anchor Bible Dictionary)

- 2.1. **Luke-Acts** together comprises ¼ of the New Testament canon
- 2.2. Conzelmann believes Luke's **theological aim** to explain **delay of the *parousia***
  - Christians not living in the last days
  - Era of the Church part of God's salvation history, preceded by Israel
- 2.3. Conzelmann criticized by those who see continuity between Luke's theology and that of the other gospels
- 2.4. O'Toole's view: Luke wrote an **orderly salvation history** with the purpose of **strengthening the faith** of those who read it
- 2.5. Luke writes a **2 volume history**
  - With parallel accounts of the **story of Jesus** (Luke) and the **story of the church** (Acts)
  - Demonstrates that the **church is a continuation of the Jesus-story**
  - Demonstrates that **Jesus' proclamations** have come to **fruition** in the church
- 2.6. Luke differs from the other gospels in referring to **Jesus as Lord** before his exaltation on the cross
- 2.7. More extreme scholars (Sanders) view Luke as having written an **anti-Jewish diatribe**; most scholars see this rhetoric as reflecting an internal struggle over the proper extent of **Christian subjugation to Jewish law**
- 2.8. The **Spirit** plays an important role in Luke-Acts both in preparing Jesus and the church to fulfill their divinely appointed tasks

## 3. Luke, the gospel

(Reference: L. T. Johnson in Anchor Bible Dictionary)

### 3.1. Introduction

- 3.1.1. **Luke, the gospel**, the first volume of a **2-volume work**, Luke-Acts
  - Prologues (Luke 1:1-4, Acts 1:1-2)
  - Style
  - Structure
  - Themes
- 3.1.2. Ancient sources do attribute both volumes to the **same author, Luke, a companion of Paul**
- 3.1.3. Consolidation of Luke-Acts based on **literary-critical approach** to biblical studies
- 3.1.4. Recognizes findings of **source and form criticism**, but gives deference to the present structural integrity of the work

## 3.2. Circumstances of Composition

- 3.2.1. Luke's status as **companion of Paul** supported by Pauline epistles (Philemon 24; Col 4:14; 2 Tim 4:11) & "we" passages of Acts
- 3.2.2. **Date of composition** varies to as late as the 2nd century
- 3.2.3. **Lack of reference to Paul's letters** is evidence of a date early enough that the epistles had not yet been collected
- 3.2.4. **Stylistic characteristics**
  - An elegant Greek style familiar with the use of rhetorical conventions
  - Rich knowledge of Hebrew scripture
  - Vivid vignettes and parables
- 3.2.5. Intended audience - Gentile Christians

## 3.3. Genre and Purpose

- 3.3.1. **Luke's unique stories** some of the best in New Testament
  - **Rich Fool** (12:13-21)
  - **Lazarus and Dives** (16:19-31)
  - **Prodigal Son** (15:11-32)
- 3.3.2. Had gospel of **Mark** as a model and source
  - Uses **Mark** so skillfully that without **Matthew** for comparison, would be difficult to identify
  - Follows Hellenistic tradition of rewriting source
  - Able to write in a **variety of styles**: compare prologue, infancy narrative, and Pentecost sermon
- 3.3.3. Main contribution: extended the story of Jesus into the story of the church and gave it a historical foundation that began with Adam (3:38)
- 3.3.4. **Prologue** states that Luke intends to write a sequential narrative (1:3 & 1:1)
- 3.3.5. Part of the meaning of the text is found in sequence of events itself
- 3.3.6. **Acts** portion of work is a commentary on the gospel portion
- 3.3.7. Most important character is **God**, who is behind everything that happens in Luke
- 3.3.8. Scholars expend much energy in determining **Luke's genre** because the ancient world valued adherence to **conventional forms** to convey specific meanings where our culture values novelty
  - 3.3.8.1. **Hellenistic romance or novel** (Cadbury and Pervo)
  - 3.3.8.2. **Hellenistic history**
    - Prologue matches form specified for histories and resembles prologues to other histories of the period
    - Only NT author to place his story in the context of crucial events in the larger ancient world (1:5; 2:1-2; 3:1-2)

- Only NT author to place his story in the context of crucial events in the larger ancient world (1:5; 2:1-2; 3:1-2)
- Events in Luke move in a sequential manner
- Appears to be as accurate as other ancient historians
- 3.3.8.3. **Hellenistic biography**
  - Concentration on Jesus resembles ancient biographies of philosophers
  - Ex. **Laertius' Lives of the Philosophers**
    - 3.3.8.3.2.1. Life story emphasizing miraculous birth, deeds and teachings
    - 3.3.8.3.2.2. Narrative of teachings and designation of disciples to carry on
  - Opponents to this view say it ignores the author's stated intention in the prologue to write a history
- 3.3.8.4. **Jewish Apology**
  - Exhibits a positive attitude toward gentiles and the Roman Empire to convince gentiles of Christianity's harmlessness or
  - To convince fellow Christians to take a less stridently eschatological stance toward the Roman Empire
  - Tracing Christianity's roots back to Adam would reassure ancients of the validity and trustworthiness of their tradition (1:4)
  - Deals with problem of gentile receptivity to good news and overall Jewish rejection
  - "He sets himself to write the continuation of the biblical story not to defend the Christian movement as such but to defend God's ways in history."

## 3.4. Literary Aspects of Luke-Acts

### 3.4.1. *Style*: Skillful redaction of Mark

(Compare healing of the Gerasene demoniac in Luke 8:26-36 and Mark 5:1-20)

- 3.4.1.1. Corrects **Mark's infelicitous phrases**
  - Changes "I adjure" of **Mark** 5:7 to "I beg" (Luke 8:28)
  - Improves tense sequence of **Mark** 5:14 to a more consistent one in Luke 8:35
- 3.4.1.2. Clarifies certain **confusions in Mark's gospel**
  - Clarifies location of the **Gerasenes** (8:26)
  - Informs reader that Jesus stepped onto land,
  - Herdsmen witness the events before they flee
  - Gives motivation for people's request (8:37)

- Gives motivation for people's request (8:37)
- Replaces Mark's vague report (5:16) with a summary and interpretation (Luke 8:36)
- 3.4.1.3. Gives the narrative a **more logical order**
  - Explains the demoniac's actions by reference to his disorder (8:28-29) as compared to an initial statement (Mark 5:3-6)
  - Prepares the reader for later reference to the city (compare Luke 8:27 with Mark 5:14)
  - Tells the reader that the man was naked before exorcism( compare Luke 8:27 with Mark 5:15)

### 3.4.2. *Biblical imitation*

- 3.4.2.1. Gospel begins by sounding like **LXX** (except for Prologue) and gradually becomes more Greek as the gospel enters the Greek world
- 3.4.2.2. Skillful use of biblical allusions
  - **Annunciation** scene (Luke 1:28-38 and Judges 13:2-7)
  - 3.4.2.2.2. **Transfiguration** and **Moses** (Luke 9:35 and Deut 18:15)
  - 3.4.2.2.3. **Jesus** and **Elijah/Elisha** (Luke 9:54 and 2 Kings 1:9-16; Luke 9:61 and 1 Kings 19:20)

### 3.4.3. *Use of narrative devices esp. In Acts*

- 3.4.3.1. Summaries (Luke 1:80)
- 3.4.3.2. Speeches (Luke 4:16-30)
- 3.4.3.3. Journeys (Luke 9 - 19)
- 3.4.3.4. Parallelism
  - **Mary** overshadowed by **Holy Spirit** (Luke 1:34-35) and **Mary and disciples** overshadowed by **Holy Spirit** (Acts 1:13-14; 2:1-4)
  - **Peter** (Acts 3:1-10) and **Paul** (Acts 14:8-11) do miracles that reflect those of Jesus (Luke 5:17-26)
  - **Stephen's trial** (Acts 6:8-15) is a reprise of **Jesus' trial** (Luke 22:66-71), a connection made by the author himself in Acts 7:56
  - Makes character connections and joins the narrative

### 3.4.4. *Literary Structure*

- 3.4.4.1. **Geography** - in **Luke**, everything moves **toward Jerusalem**; in **Acts**, the action proceeds **outward from Jerusalem**
- 3.4.4.2. **Prophecy**
  - 3.4.4.2.1. Finding **prophetic fulfillment of Hebrew scriptures** in the life of Jesus a standard element of Christian apologetic
    - Characters in Luke's gospel utter prophecies that come to pass such as Jesus' predictions of his death (9:22, 44; 18:34-33) - called **literary prophecy**
    - Some of these **literary prophecies** actually interpret for the reader the events that follow such as **Simeon's** prophetic statement in Luke 2:34 that sets up the entire gospel as the story of a prophet who created a division in God's people
    - Some prophecies set up a literary irony like Jesus' saying that a prophet not acceptable in his own nation (Luke 4:16-30)

### 3.4.5. *Prophetic Structure (Acts as the fulfillment of Luke)*

- 3.4.5.1. **Apostles as prophets** - filled with the Spirit, they proclaim the good news and do miracles among the people
- 3.4.5.2. **Jesus as the prophet like Moses** - Pentecost as fulfillment of Joel 2:28- 32 and Deut 34:10-12
  - Jesus as the prophet "God raised up" (see Deut above)
  - **Spirit of Jesus** empowers the disciples (Acts 2:33; 4:10; 13:30,33)
  - Explicit connection between **Jesus** and **Moses** (Acts 3:22-23 & Deut 18:15, 18-19)
- 3.4.5.3. Jesus life follows the **Mosaic pattern of the necessity of suffering before glory** (Luke 24:25-27)
- 3.4.5.4. Gospel in the light of **Acts**
  - Tells of the first sending, the people's rejection, and the prophet being "raised up"
  - Acts tells of the 2nd sending (of the disciples) and judgment of God
  - This pattern is hinted at in the gospel in the narrative of the raising of the widow's son (Luke 7:11-16)

## 3.5. The Prophet and the People

### 3.5.1. The Infancy Account

- 3.5.1.1. Luke 1-2 viewed by scholars as a **haggadic midrash**
- 3.5.1.2. Complex internal structure
  - Annunciation to **Zechariah** (1:8-23) and to Mary (1:26-38)
  - **Birth of John** (1:57-66) and **Jesus** (2:1-21)
  - **Annunciations** followed by **Mary's visitation of Elizabeth** (1:39-45) and **Mary's canticle** (1:47-55)
  - Births followed by visit to temple for purification and Simeon's canticle (2:22-38)
- 3.5.1.3. John and Jesus are both prophets with special meaning for Israel
- 3.5.1.4. **Simeon's canticle and prophecy** prepare us for what comes later (2:29-35)

### 3.5.2. The Prophetic Messiah

- 3.5.2.1. Expressed in **Jesus' rejection in Nazareth** (4:16-30) - story found in **Mark**, but at a later point in his ministry instead of its inauguration
- 3.5.2.2. Jesus is **messiah** because he is anointed by the **Spirit** (4:18; Isaiah 61:1-2)
- 3.5.2.3. **Elijah** and **Elisha** are prophets through whom God "visits" those outside Israel (4:25-27) and the residents of Nazareth reject Jesus for this
- 3.5.2.4. Luke 4:18 is fulfilled in Luke 6:20-26 where the poor are blessed and the rich are cursed with woes; generally, the role of the poor is played by the sinners and tax collectors of the narrative and the rich are the Pharisees and teachers of the law
- 3.5.2.5. Just as **Elisha** healed a foreign diplomat with the intercession of a Jewish maid (2 Kings 5:1-14) so Jesus heals a centurion's servant with the intercession of Jewish elders (Luke 7:1-10)
- 3.5.2.6. **Elijah** raised a **widow's son** (1Kings 17:17-24); **Jesus** raises a **widow's son** (Luke 7:11-15)
- 3.5.2.7. Jesus is rejected by the pharisee in whose home he dines but is recognized by the woman who anoints him (Luke 7:36-50)

### 3.5.3. Formation of the People

- 3.5.3.1. Begins with a **core group of 12** and some women (8:1-3)
- 3.5.3.2. **Disciples** are given authority like Jesus'

(9:2,11) and help serve the hungry (9:10-17)

- 3.5.3.3. Formation occurs **during journey** (9:51-19:44) climaxing with the **Transfiguration** thus signaling that this journey parallels that of **Moses**
- 3.5.3.4. The **kingdom of God** is initialized during the **journey to Jerusalem** (17:21)
- 3.5.3.5. Journey ends with **Jesus' lament** that **Jerusalem** has not recognized its visitation (19:44)

### 3.5.4. The Passion Narrative

- 3.5.4.1. More unique than either **Mark** or **Matthew**
- 3.5.4.2. Jesus is portrayed as a sage exhibiting self-control, freedom from fear, and courage
  - Gives farewell address (22:29-30)
  - Disciples' sorrow (& therefore cowardice) are contrasted with Jesus (22:45)
  - Carries on his mission willingly (22:42)
  - Jesus is not only wise, but just or righteous (dikaios) (23:4,14,22; 23:15)
- 3.5.4.3. Luke minimizes the role of the people in Jesus' death (24:20-21) as compared to Matthew (Matt 27:25); in Luke the people exhibit repentance (23:48)

### 3.5.5. Resurrection and Ascension

- 3.5.5.1. **Jesus' Resurrection** is a sign of God's vindication (Acts 2:24; 3:13-15) just as **Moses** was vindicated by God (Acts 7:34-38)
- 3.5.5.2. Characteristics of **Resurrection accounts**
  - Centered in Jerusalem (Luke 24:6) - note women not told to go to Galilee
  - Jesus' passion predictions were fulfilled
  - Jesus' passion fulfills Hebrew scriptures beginning with Moses (24:25-26, 44)
  - Appearances are a mix of physical presence (24:30, 41-43), mistaken identity (24:13-35), and surprise (24:11,24,41)
  - Are prophetically fulfilled in Acts (24:47-49)
- 3.5.5.3. **Ascension story** is unique to Luke-Acts (Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-11; cf Luke 9:31, 51)

## **Primary Reference**

**Anchor Bible Dictionary.** Ed. by David Freedman.  
Anchor/Doubleday.

# The Gospel of Luke. Session 6. Luke 4:14-30. Rejection at Nazareth: "Luke in a Nutshell"

Notes by Linda Monyak. Last update January 7, 2001.

## Topics

Reading of Luke 4:14-30

Questions for Discussion

Notes for Discussion

Use of summary statement in Isaiah 4:14-15

The parallel passage to Luke 4:14-30 in Mark 6:1-6

The Isaiah passage read by Jesus

Luke 4:14-30 marks a transformation of Jesus

Significance of Jesus' custom of going to the synagogue

How the people of Jesus' day viewed and used the reading of biblical passages in the synagogue

Honor and Shame

Importance of health in the ancient world

Luke 4:19 and the Year of Jubilee

Significance of Jesus' Proclaiming the Kingdom

References

## Reading of Luke 4:14-30

- Luke 4:14-30

## Questions for discussion

- What strikes you as meaningful in this passage?
- Is there anything that you noticed in this reading that you have never noticed before?
- How does this passage serve as a mini-version of the Gospel of Luke?
- Who says what to whom about what, in what setting, and for what purpose? (Malina's ?)

## Notes for discussion:

Use of summary statement in Isaiah 4:14-15

- Introduction of the theme of the Spirit's role
- Jesus inaugurates his ministry "filled with the power of the Spirit." How does the Acts of the Apostles begin?

## The parallel passage to Luke 4:14-30 in Mark 6:1-6

- Proverb parallel to Luke 4:24 is Mark 6:4
- There are additional non-canonical sources in which this proverb is found, including the Gospel of Thomas ("Jesus said, 'No prophet is accepted in his own town; a physician does not heal those who know him'").

## The Isaiah passage read by Jesus

- Isaiah 61:1-2; Isaiah 58:6
- Anointing referred to in Isaiah is that conferred on prophets, not kings
- Squares with comparison to Elijah and Elisha later in the passage
  - Elijah narrative - I Kings 18:1; I Kings 17:9
  - Elisha narrative - 2 Kings 5:1-19

## Luke 4:14-30 marks a transformation of Jesus

(from: Mark McVann, Chapter 12 in *The Social World of Luke-Acts. Models for Interpretation*)

- Luke 4:14-30 marks the transformation of Jesus, the private individual, to Jesus, the public figure
- Immediately follows temptation in wilderness
- Marks transformation in several areas
  - Chaos to order
  - Student to teacher
  - Follower (of John the Baptist) to leader
  - Private to public person
  - Passivity to power
- Ritual elements:
  - Initiand: Jesus
  - New role: prophet
  - Elder: John the Baptizer
  - Symbols: river, desert, mountain, temple, scripture, etc.
- Ritual process:
  - Separation
  - Liminality
  - Communitas
  - Confrontation
  - Aggregation

- Prophets:
  - “Speak oracles of warning and judgment against sin”
  - New revelations from God
  - “Holy, separate, all-seeing, faithful to God’s covenant, powerful in word”
  - Elijah & Elisha: cured lepers (2 Kings 5:1-19), raised the dead (1 Kings 17:17-24), multiplied food (2 Kings 4:42-44)

## Significance of Jesus' custom of going to the synagogue

(from: Neyrey, Jerome, in Chapter 10 of **The Social World of Luke-Acts. Models for Interpretation**)

- Jesus went to the synagogue as was his custom - signifies
  - Jesus place in the culture
  - his obedience to God
  - participation in covenant between God and Israel

## How the people of Jesus' day viewed and used the reading of biblical passages in the synagogue

(from: Malina, Bruce, in Chapter 1 of **The Social World of Luke-Acts. Models for Interpretation**)

- “...in synagogue preaching the biblical passage will be explained in terms of contemporary occurrence, while in debate the passage will be used to dishonor opponents; in temple discussions the readings might look to legal precedent.”
- The society of Jesus' time was a "high context society:"
  - **Low context societies:** detailed texts, leaving little to the imagination. Ex. The Congressional Record, our society
  - **High context societies:** sketchy texts with few details, the biblical and Mediterranean world

## Honor and Shame

(from: Malina & Neyrey in Chapter 2 of **The Social World of Luke-Acts. Models for Interpretation**)

- In Luke 4:14-30, we see denial of honor to Jesus at inaugural appearance
- Sees Luke as writing a corrective to society’s labeling of Him as a false prophet and a danger to society
- Honor & birth/kinship. The challenges to Jesus’ honor:
  - a carpenter
  - son of Mary

## Importance of health in the ancient world

(from: Oakman, Douglas E, in Chapter 6 of **The Social World of Luke-Acts. Models for Interpretation**).

- Health and the critical importance to status and liberation in the ancient world

## Luke 4:19 and the Year of Jubilee

(from: Oakman, Douglas E, in Chapter 6 of **The Social World of Luke-Acts. Models for Interpretation**)

- compare Luke 4:19 and references to the year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:8-22 and Isaiah 61:1-4)

## Significance of Jesus' Proclaiming the Kingdom

(from: Moxnes, Halvor, in Chapter 9 of **The Social World of Luke-Acts. Models for Interpretation**)

- Jesus acts as broker for the people and their relationship to God by proclaiming the kingdom

## References

- **The Social World of Luke-Acts. Models for Interpretation.** Jerome H. Neyrey, Editor. Hendrickson Publishers. Peabody Massachusetts. 1991
  - Ch. 1. Bruce J. Malina. Reading Theory Perspective: Reading Luke-Acts
  - Ch 2. Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey. Honor and Shame in Luke-Acts: Pivotal Values of the Mediterranean World
  - Ch. 6. Douglas E. Oakman. The Countryside in Luke-Acts.
  - Ch. 9. Halvor Moxnes. Patron-Client Relations and the New Community in Luke-Acts
  - Ch. 10. Jerome H. Neyrey. The Symbolic Universe of Luke-Acts: "They Turn the World Upside Down"
  - Ch. 12. Mark McVann. Rituals of Status Transformation in Luke-Acts: The Case of Jesus the Prophet