



**CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE
DIOCESE OF SALE**

Teaching and Learning About Scripture

**Diocese of Sale: Luke
The Gospel of Luke
Acts of the Apostles**

<http://home.freeuk.net/thelukesite/links.htm>



Who was Luke?

- The short answer is that we don't really know.
- None of the Gospels or early writings was 'signed' by their author, so the early Church went in search of those who *could have* written them.
- In order to find possible writers, the Church looked at the historical recollections of people and other ancient writings, including some of Paul's letters.



For evidence that the two works are written by the same author read the opening verses of Luke and Acts. Acts refers to an earlier work, written for Theophilus.

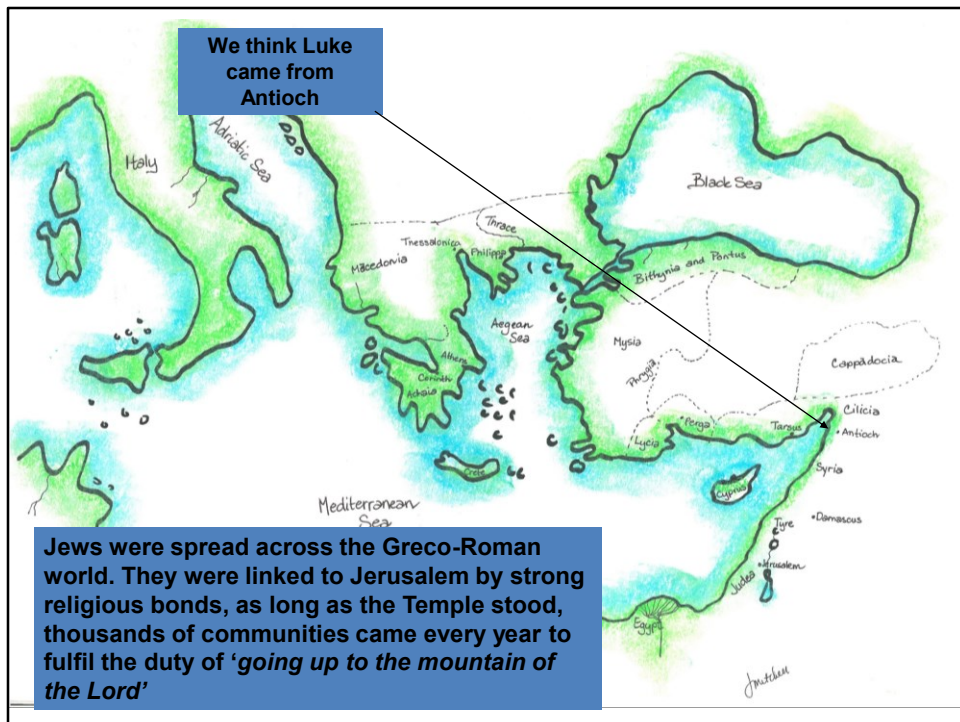


Who was Luke?

- Some think Luke was a doctor and a companion mentioned by St Paul in his letters, but we don't know for sure, in fact it is unlikely.
- If he was a doctor, Luke would have had both the education and skill to write such great works. Even if he wasn't Paul's doctor friend he was obviously a very good writer.



The Acts of the Apostles is the second volume of a single work by the writer known as Luke. Although it is a different literary form from the first volume (Luke is a Gospel, Acts is an Historical Narrative), Acts follows on directly from The Gospel of Luke and as such provides the only continuous record of what happened during and after the life of Jesus from one author. The idea that The Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles could have been written by Luke came from Paul's letters (Col 4:1, Phil 2, Tim 4:11) which say that Luke was a companion of his, a doctor. However, most scholars now think that the likelihood of Paul's physician companion, Luke, being the author of the Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles, is not very high. Examination of the writing of Luke and Paul leads to the conclusion that Paul's companion was most likely not the author of the gospel and Acts. The reasons for this are many, but draw heavily on absence of knowledge of Luke about Paul's communities plus the differing theologies of the two writers, particularly with regard to who could be called an apostle. Scholars are still sure that no matter who the person we call Luke is, they are the author of both works, the Gospel and Acts.





Who was Luke?

- So, in short, we really don't know who wrote the books attributed to 'Luke' in the Christian Scriptures (New Testament).
- What we can do though, is look *at the actual works* to find out what 'Luke' thought of Jesus, what he was interested in and who he might have written for.



Who was Luke?

- So from his writing we can tell that the author of Luke and Acts was well educated. He writes in very fluent Greek and has a good knowledge of the Torah (the Law books of the Hebrew people).



Theophilus could be the name of a patron who commissioned Luke to write, or it could be a play on words in which Luke cleverly writes for all people who love God.

Luke's Gospel is sometimes called a Gospel of jubilee as the themes are all great news for those listening



Who was Luke?

- He also had time and inclination to write a lot! Luke is the only writer in the New Testament who wrote two works: a gospel (a story of Good News of Jesus the Christ) and an historical narrative called Acts of the Apostles. Both are dedicated to Theophilus, a name which means 'lover of God'. (Lk 1:3, Acts 1:1)





Who was Luke?

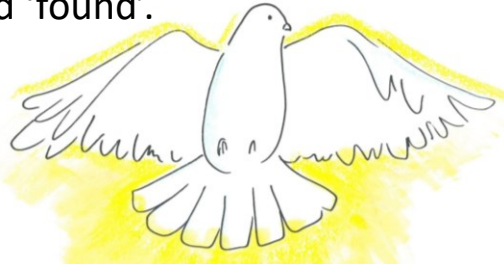
- Because Luke has two works we are able to see his writing style very clearly.
- Luke uses a number of Greek literary forms
 - Speeches
 - Summaries
 - Journeys





Who was Luke?

- Luke's writing also shows that he has a number of particular interests. Luke is interested in the Holy Spirit, prayer and the emerging Church. He is also interested in the theme which he places literally in the middle chapter (Chapter 15) of his gospel: being 'lost' and 'found'.



As one would expect, Acts continues and develops many of the themes begun by Luke in his Gospel. One of these is his particular interest in the Holy Spirit.

Luke refers to the Holy Spirit more often than any other Second Testament writer. In fact, such is the presence of the Holy Spirit, intervening, guiding and impelling the disciples, that Acts has been referred to as 'the book of the Holy Spirit'[1]. In keeping with the pattern he established in his Gospel, Luke makes a point of stating that all of his key characters are filled with the Holy Spirit. (See Luke 1:15, 1:41, 1:67 and Acts 4:8, 5:32, 6:3, 7:55, 11:24, 13:9) Their actions are thus seen as being not only in accord with God's intention but enabled by the Spirit.



Who was Luke?

- Luke has some stories which no other author has: several stories about the birth of Jesus, the good Samaritan, the prodigal son and Zacchaeus. This means he must have had access to stories that only his community had remembered.





Who was Luke?

- Finally, Luke seems to write as a Gentile (not a Jew) and for a community that were mostly Gentiles as well. He probably wrote in Antioch, in Syria.
- That means he is very keen to show that *all people* are chosen to become part of God's kingdom: God calls, invites all people, not just the people of Israel.





When did Luke write his works?

- The Gospel of Luke was written in about 80-85 CE. Luke tells us that he did not know Jesus – he was not a witness to the life of Jesus, but he wrote after having ‘investigated’ those who did know Jesus personally or those who had been told by eyewitnesses. (Lk 1:1-4)



When did Luke write his works?

- Although Acts tells us what happened in the years 50-60 CE, after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, we think that it too was written about 25 years after that time, in about 80-85 CE.





How did the Gospels come about?

- The process from which the Gospels grew is important. There were three stages in the development of the Gospels.

1. Jesus lived with and taught a group of men and women. They became his disciples.	2. His disciples talked about him to their communities after the death and resurrection.	3. The evangelists wrote down the stories the community had retained. They adapted them, ordered them and interpreted them to suit the needs of their audience.
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The three stage process of writing of the Gospels is important to explain. None of the Gospel writers knew Jesus personally – they have all come to faith after hearing about him from others who believe. Writing for an audience with particular concerns and needs they freely adapt and alter stories of Jesus, arrange them to suit their overall plan, and interpret his acts and words. This reality does not change the truth of the accounts, which is held not in the details but in the essence of what is said.



Where did Luke get his information from?

- As well as gathering the stories which were being told in his community, Luke had two other sources of information.
 - 1. The Gospel of Mark, which was written about 20 years before The Gospel of Luke.
 - Luke uses most of Mark's stories, in Mark's order.
 - 2. Another source, one which Matthew also uses. We call this source 'Q' which means 'source' in German.





What was Luke's purpose in writing?

- Luke claims that his intention was to sort and arrange all the stories he had heard so that they made a complete story *of faith*.
- He did not want to write a biography of Jesus, nor did he want to write a history book. He wanted to write a story which would help people come to know Jesus and persuade them that he was God's son.





What was Luke's purpose in writing?

- This is important because we need to know what '**truth**' Luke was trying to share.
- For Luke, the truth was that Jesus was the Son of God, the messiah.



A word about 'truth'...

- So, if Luke describes things differently from another Gospel writer it is because he thought his audience would understand the message better if it was worded a different way.
- The Church puts it this way: 'Each evangelist chose a method suited to their purpose; they reduced or adapted material, re-ordered and explained others, all determined by what would be useful to their audience.'

Historical Truth of the Gospels 1964



A word about 'truth'...

- Our task is to 'seek out what each evangelist meant in recounting events or sayings in a particular way'. Historical Truth of the Gospels 1964
- That's why you are learning this! If you don't know anything about the Bible, you might get the wrong message from it.



A word about 'truth'...

- But remember! None of this takes away from the important truths about God and about Jesus as the *incarnation* of God that the Gospels contain; 'for the truth of the story is not affected by the fact that the Evangelists relate the words and deeds of the Lord,' differently.

No IX, 1964 The Historical Truth of the Gospels

The term incarnation is the term which describes belief that Jesus was God in human form.



A word about 'truth'...

Luke believed that Jesus was the Son
of God,
the messiah!
So do we!
And that's the truth!