

3. Luke

A. Is Luke the author?

1) External Evidence

- a. Like Matthew and Mark, all existing and known manuscripts start the gospel with a superscription, “according to Luke.” There is also a parallel between Luke 10:7 and 1 Timothy 5:18.
- b. The testimony from all parts of the Mediterranean world is that Luke was the author of the third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, and that he wrote primarily for a Gentile audience. Luke is identified as a close companion of Paul and Luke’s gospel is understood to reflect Paul’s influence.

2) Internal Evidence

- a. From the introduction (1:1-4) we learn that while the author was *not* an eyewitness to the events he records, he knew others who were (1:2). He researched the events carefully and claimed accuracy (1:3-4). The writer had a keen intellect and literary ability.
- b. The evidence from Acts suggests **common** authorship. Both works are dedicated to the same individual (Luke 1:4; Acts 1:1). Acts refers to another “account,” and begins precisely where the third gospel ends. Both works show strong similarities in language, style, and perspective.
- c. The “we” sections of Acts indicate that the author was a close companion of Paul (cf. Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-16; 21:1-8; 27:1-28:6).
- d. Evidence from the Gospel and Acts suggest the author was a **Gentile** rather than a Jew, particularly where he refers to the Jews as though he were not a part of that group (cf. Luke 4:44; 23:51; Acts 10:39; 13:5; 14:1; 17:1; 21:11).
- e. There is evidence that the author in both treatises was a **physician**. This is seen both in the interest the author shows in medical issues as well as in the language he employs in describing these issues (e.g., Luke 4:38; 5:12, 18, 24, 31; 6:18; 8:44; 10:34–35; 13:11, 32; Acts 3:7; 5:5, 10; 9:33; 12:23; 28:8).

Of Paul’s companions who were part of the apostle’s entourage in the “we” sections in Acts, only Luke fits all of the evidence to be the author of the Gospel and Acts. Paul distinguishes Luke from his Jewish colleagues in Colossians 4:10–14 and refers to him as a “beloved physician” (4:14). Luke’s value to the apostle is eloquently expressed in the last letter Paul wrote, 2 Timothy. There the apostle, languishing in a Roman prison with his life in the balance, states that of all his colleagues, “only Luke is with me” (2 Tim 4:11).

B. Who did Luke write to?

- 1) Luke specifically identifies Theophilus (“lover of God”) as the one to whom he writes (Luke 1:3). Theophilus is called “most excellent” which may point to great wealth or social prominence. Luke dedicated his writing to this person, a common occurrence in the first century when the honored person financially supported the work and was responsible for its publication for a wider audience.
- 2) Luke’s “wider audience” was intended primarily for **Gentile** readers. We can see this from:
 - a. Omission of Jewish expressions or replacement with Greek ones (cf. Luke 6:15 with Matt 10:4; Luke 19:38 with Matt 21:9; Luke 23:33 with Matt 27:33).
 - b. Explanation of Jewish customs and localities (cf. 1:26; 4:31; 8:26; 22:1; 23:51; 24:13)
 - c. While Luke quotes numerous passages from the OT, his quotations show a decided preference for the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the OT used by believers throughout the Mediterranean world.
 - d. Luke takes pains to locate the life and ministry of Jesus to the larger Roman world (e.g., 2:1; 3:1).

C. Why did Luke write? What was his purpose?

By looking at the very beginning of Luke’s gospel (1:1-4) we can see that his purpose in writing was to give a careful, orderly **account** of “the things accomplished among us,” in other words the **basis** of Christianity. Luke writes “so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught,” in other words to have an **authoritative** basis for Christian faith and practice.

Keep in mind that Luke’s account of Christianity is in **two** parts, first his gospel, detailing the *foundation* of Christianity, and second the Acts, detailing the *growth* of Christianity.

The purpose of Luke’s gospel, then, is to provide a solid **basis** for Christianity, centered on the person and work of Jesus Christ.

What are some characteristics of Luke’s gospel?

- 1) The kingdom of God (1:33; 4:43; 9:2; 11:2; 13:22-30; 17:20-21; 22:14-18)
- 2) Conversion and discipleship (5:32; 8:12; 9:23-24; 12:8-9)
- 3) Emphasis on **prayer** (3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28; 10:21; 11:1; 22:31, 41; 23:34, 46)

- 4) Emphasis on the **Holy Spirit**. Luke has more references to the Holy Spirit than Matthew and Mark combined (1:15, 35, 41, 67; 2:25-27; 3:16, 22; 4:1, 14, 18; 10:21; 11:13; 12:10, 12)
- 5) **Women** have a prominent role (1:24–56; 2:36–38; 7:11–18; 7:36–50; 8:1–3; 10:38–42; 23:27–31; 24:1–11). This is significant, as at that time society had a low view of women.
- 6) Concern for the **poor** (2:8ff, 24; 4:18; 6:20, 24; 7:22; 14:11-13, 21; 16:19ff) and the dangers of riches (1:53; 6:24; 12:16ff; 16:1ff; 16:19-31; 18:18-27; 19:1-10; 21:1-4)
- 7) Concern for **sinners** (5:30; 7:37-50; 12:13-21; 15:1; 16:1-12, 19-31; 18:1-8, 9-14; 19:7)
- 8) The **worldwide** scope of salvation, seeing how both Jews and Gentiles fit into God’s plan (2:14, 32; 4:25-27; 7:2-10; 9:51-54; 10:30-37; 13:29; 17:16; 24:27)

D. What are the “keys” to Luke?

- 1) Theme: The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost
- 2) Verse: 19:10
- 3) Pivotal Verse: 9:51

Starting at 9:51 there are 10 chapters detailing Jesus’ final journey to Jerusalem. “This is the heart of Luke’s gospel, and it features a theme Luke stressed throughout: Jesus’ relentless progression toward the cross. This was the very purpose for which Christ had come to earth (cf. 9:22-23; 17:25; 18:31-33; 24:25-26, 46), and He would not be deterred. The saving of sinners was His whole mission (19:10)” (*MacArthur Study Bible*, p. 1472).

E. What did Luke write? How did Luke seek to accomplish his purpose?

Here’s a basic outline of the Gospel according to Luke—

- 1) Jesus’ background, 1:1-4:13
- 2) Jesus’ ministry in Galilee, 4:14-9:50
- 3) Jesus’ ministry leading to His ascension, 9:51-24:53

Here’s a more detailed outline of Luke—

- 1) Prelude to Jesus’ Ministry, 1:1-4:13
 - a. Preamble, 1:1-4
 - b. Jesus’ birth, 1:5-2:38
 - c. Jesus’ boyhood, 2:39-52
 - d. Jesus’ ministry preparation, 3:1-4:13
- 2) Jesus’ Ministry in Galilee, 4:14-9:50
 - a. The beginning of His ministry, 4:14-44
 - b. Calling of His disciples, 5:1-6:16
 - c. Continuation of His ministry, 6:17-9:50

- Sermon on the Mount, 6:17-49
 - Ministering in the cities, 7:1-8:25
 - Traveling in Galilee, 8:26-9:50
- 3) Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem, 9:51-19:27
 - a. Samaria, 9:51-10:37
 - b. Bethany and Judea, 10:38-13:35
 - c. Perea, 14:1-19:27
 - 4) The Passion Week, 19:28-23:56
 - a. Monday, 19:28-44
 - b. Tuesday, 19:45-48
 - c. Wednesday, 20:1-22:6
 - d. Thursday, 22:7-53
 - e. Friday, 22:54-23:55
 - f. The Sabbath, 23:56
 - 5) The Consummation of Jesus' Ministry, 24:1-53
 - a. Resurrection, 24:1-12
 - b. Road to Emmaus, 24:13-45
 - c. Ascension, 24:46-53

4. John

A. Is John the author?

1) External Evidence

- a. As with the other three gospels, the author of the fourth gospel is not specifically named. The unanimous tradition of church history identifies the apostle John, the disciple “whom Jesus loved” (13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20, 24) as its author.
- b. Irenaeus (c. A.D. 140-203), Tertullian (c. 155-222) and Origen (c. 185-253) say that John wrote this gospel. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215) testified that John wrote his gospel to supplement the Synoptic Gospels (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.14.7).

2) Internal Evidence

- a. The author knew Jewish **life** well: references to Messianic speculations (1:20-21; 7:40-42), hostility between Jews and Samaritans (4:9), and Jewish customs (7:22).
- b. The author knew the **geography** of Palestine: locating Bethany’s proximity to Jerusalem (11:18) and being the sole identifier of Cana (2:1; 21:2)
- c. The fourth gospel has aspects that point to an **eyewitness**, such as the fragrance from broken perfume jar filling house at Bethany (12:3)
- d. The apostle John is **never** mentioned by name in the fourth gospel, while at least 20 times the other gospel writers mention him. Instead, he is mentioned as the disciple “whom Jesus loved” (13:23), pointing to his humility and thankfulness for his close relationship to Christ.
- e. The author gives **three direct statements** of himself in 1:14; 19:35; and 21:24. In the context of the last passage (21:24)—“the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things”—he identifies himself in v. 20 as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” The argument notes that there were three disciples particularly intimate with Christ (Peter, James, and John); that Peter is excluded from being this disciple in 21:20; that as James was beheaded early on, the report in 21:23 could not have referred to him; therefore, this must refer to John.

B. Who did John write to?

John does not address a particular cultural or sociological readership. Jesus will save whoever believes on him (3:16-17; 6:40; 10:16; 12:32).

C. Why did John write? What was his purpose?

- 1) John clearly states his main purpose in **20:31**—“*these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.*” The author’s primary purpose in writing was **evangelistic**.

This evangelistic goal is seen by people’s divided response to the message: they either through repentant faith **commit** themselves to Christ thus receiving life or they **reject** Christ and remain in darkness.

- 2) The overall, central theme of John’s gospel is the **person** of Jesus. True biblical faith necessarily has a doctrinal core that must be positively responded to. Both **doctrine** (3:10) and **experience** (3:3) are essential for a biblical presentation of the Christian faith.
- 3) This purpose can be compared with 1 John, whose purpose statement in 5:13 is clearly directed toward Christians. No true believer would genuinely ask the question, “Who is Jesus?” that the gospel of John addresses. First John’s stated purpose is clearly focused on *edification*; on the other hand, the gospel of John’s stated purpose has an *evangelistic* focus.
- 4) John probably has a secondary purpose in writing that is apologetic in nature, that is, his account contains information useful for **defending** the faith. Since he wrote to prove Jesus as the Son of God, this necessarily involved the deity of Christ. The gospel revolves around various proofs that demonstrate Jesus’ identity as the God-man, and these proofs would be useful in defending the faith.

What are some characteristics of John’s gospel?

- 1) There is a large amount of material that is found only in John’s gospel.
- 2) John has a simple style of writing and vocabulary. He uses words such as *truth, light, darkness, life, and love*. His style of writing is clear, short, and plain.
- 3) This gospel stresses the **uniqueness** of Jesus as “the Son of God” more heavily than the other gospels. From the prologue (1:1-18) to his claims of deity in the face of angry Jewish leaders (5:16-18; 8:57-59; 10:30-33; 19:7) John emphasizes that Jesus is God.
- 4) John is the most **theological** of the Gospels, providing data on the pre-incarnate Christ (1:1-4), the incarnation (1:14-18), the new birth (3:1-21), and a large amount of material on the Holy Spirit (e.g., 14:16, 17, 26; 16:7-14).
- 5) John does not include several key events and discourses that the other gospel writers do. Key events that the fourth gospel does not include are Christ’s birth, baptism, temptation, transfiguration, the Lord’s Supper, and prayer in Gethsemane. While John relates more of Jesus’ words than any other synoptic, he does not relate a single parable.

D. What are the “keys” to John?

- 1) Theme: Jesus is God, the Savior
- 2) Word: **believe** (about 100 times—Matt, Mark, and Luke use it half as much!)
- 3) Verse: 20:31

E. What did John write? How did John seek to accomplish his purpose?

To accomplish his stated purpose in 20:31, John relates eight miracles Jesus performed—

- 1) Turning water to wine, 2:1-11
- 2) Healing the nobleman’s son, 4:46-54
- 3) Healing the impotent man, 5:2-18
- 4) Feeding of the 5000, 6:1-14
- 5) Walking on water, 6:15-21
- 6) Healing the man born blind, 9:1-11
- 7) Raising of Lazarus from the dead, 11:38-44
- 8) Miraculous catch of fish, 21:4-8

By these “signs,” as John called them (cf. 2:23; 3:2; 4:54; 6:2, 14, 26, 30; 7:31; 9:16; 10:41; 11:47; 12:18, 37; 20:30) Jesus’ person and authority are clearly demonstrated so that the reader is encouraged to believe in him (3:16).

Here’s a basic outline of the Gospel according to John—

- 1) Jesus’ public ministry, chapters 1-12
- 2) Jesus’ private ministry, chapters 13-17
- 3) Jesus’ passion victory, chapters 18-21

Here’s a more detailed outline of John—

- 1) Prologue, 1:1-18
 - a. The Word and God, 1:1-2
 - b. The Word and Creation, 1:3
 - c. The Word and Mankind, 1:4-13
 - d. The Word and the OT System, 1:14-18
- 2) Jesus’ Public Ministry, 1:19-12:50
 - a. Early belief in Judea and Jerusalem, 1:19-2:25
 - b. Nicodemus and the New Birth, 3
 - c. Early belief in Samaria and Galilee, 4:1-54
 - d. The growth of unbelief, 5
 - e. The feeding of the five thousand, 6
 - f. At the feast of the tabernacles, 7-8
 - g. A blind man and the Shepherd, 9-10
 - h. The raising of Lazarus and the close of the public ministry, 11-12

- 3) Jesus' Private Instruction, 13-17
 - a. Christ's final discourse—in the upper room, 13-14
 - b. Christ's final discourse—en route to the garden, 15-17
- 4) Jesus' Passion Victory, 18-21
 - a. The crucifixion, 18-19
 - b. The resurrection, 20
- 5) Epilogue, 21
 - a. The miraculous catch of fish, 21:1-14
 - b. Jesus' conversation with Peter, 21:15-23
 - c. The author's concluding testimony, 21:24-25