

4. Survey Notes on the Gospel of Luke

As Matthew presents Christ as the King and Mark shows him in the role of servant, we usually note that Luke seems to portray Jesus as the perfect man.

a. An overview

The unanimous tradition of the early church ascribes the third Gospel and the book of Acts to the same author--Luke, the physician, friend, and companion of Paul. Although this position is generally accepted, examining the internal evidence in the Bible will also prepare us for the study of Acts.

It is apparent that both the third Gospel and Acts were written by the same author. Both are dedicated to Theophilus; Acts 1:1 mentions "my former book"; the language and style are similar; common sympathies link them (women, the Gentiles, Jesus' post-resurrection appearances in Judea). The author appears to have been a companion of Paul because "we" is used in several sections of Acts, suggesting the author was with Paul (which narrows down the list of possible authors).

Most scholars suggest a date late in the first century for the time of its appearance. Their reasons are: 1) if Luke drew from the text of Mark, Luke must post-date Mark's Gospel and therefore be later than AD 68 (Peter's death); 2) Luke 21:20, compared with the prophecy in Mark 13-14 which uses Daniel's phrase "the abomination of desolation" warns readers to flee when the armies surround Jerusalem. Since this occurred in AD 70 when Jerusalem was besieged by Romans under the emperor Titus, Luke must have felt he needed to alter Mark's prophecy for historical accuracy (prophecy "after the event"); 3) in order for "man" to have written about Jesus (1:1), considerable time would have been necessary after 68 AD (see above), since we do not have "many" gospels from before that time; 4) Luke's Gospel was written at about the same time as Matthew's since Matthew is dated 85-90 AD, Luke must be also.

In response, there is no absolute proof that Luke used Mark; even if there were, Luke could have used it as soon as it was written, since he and Mark were most likely together in Jerusalem at the time. If Luke wrote after AD 70, why was he so vague about the catastrophic events of that year? (This whole objection to the earlier traditional date is based on an a priori argument against predictive prophecy). Also, if Luke were written after the event, why did many Christians living in Jerusalem at the time take this prophecy as a warning and flee the city when they saw the Roman armies? Lack of evidence ("many" gospels) cannot be used as a genuine argument. Nor is