

# LUKE (The beloved physician)

His name means: "light, bright, white"

## INTRODUCTION

It was common practice in the apostolic days to shorten names and Luke (or Lukas) is an abbreviation of the Gentile name Loukanos, which means "light, bright, white".

Even though the Bible says little about Luke directly, we can put together a few pieces of the puzzle and assemble a fascinating portrait of this great writer and Christian.

It is not certain but some feel that he and Titus were brothers based on **II Corinthians 8:18**. No one can positively state where he made his home, but most feel it was in *Philippi*.

This fact that we know so very little about Luke the man just adds to the fascination about this great and humble person. He no doubt wanted it that way. In his view, what he wrote was never about him but about Christ or what Christ did through others.

He was the writer of the Gospel bearing his name, and also of the Acts of the Apostles, the introduction to both being addressed to a certain Theophilus (*lover of God*) but he never mentions his own name in his gospel account or in the book of the Acts in which he plays a major role. Luke was a fellow labourer with Paul, and called '*the beloved physician*' but he is only mentioned three times by name. (**Philemon 24; Col. 4: 14 and 2 Tim. 4: 11**)

It is supposed from internal evidences that he was a Gentile. We see that he was not treated as a Jew who was preaching to the Gentiles as Luke is not included among those "*of the circumcision*" (**Col. 4:9-14**) but along with Epaphras and Demas forms a group of Gentiles who assisted Paul in his travels and work. It is also seen where he was not imprisoned with Paul and Silas. (**Acts 16**)

We also see touching **medical and sailing details** in Luke's writings. In **Luke 4:38, 39** he records about Simon's mother-in-law sick with a fever and in **Acts 28:8** Luke reports that Publius' father "*lay sick of a fever and dysentery*".

He also humbly records in **Luke 8:43** that no physician could heal the woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years. What does he do in this case? He appropriately shines the spotlight on the true Healer, the Lord Jesus Christ!

It is obvious from his account in **Acts 27** of the shipwreck that he had extensive knowledge as a mariner.

We also learn something about people by their writing styles. Luke is clearly highly educated and as a physician, he would have studied a great deal more than medicine, including philosophy and classical literature.

God used Luke's God given talents and learning in the inspired writings of Luke's gospel and the Acts of the Holy Spirit.

## LUKE'S GOSPEL

The other gospels were written by eyewitnesses (Matthew, Mark, and John) to the events they record. Luke admits in the first verses of his account that he was not an eyewitness of the life of Christ, but carefully records what eyewitnesses reported to him and others (**Luke 1:1-4**).

Luke's focus in his gospel account is on **Christ the Man**. This contrasts with Matthew's emphasis on **Christ the King**; Mark's, on **Christ the Servant**; and John's, on **Christ the Son of God**.

The order with which he writes in Luke's gospel is moral and not chronological.

As a Gentile, Luke's great appreciation for Jesus' sacrifice for all men—Jew and Gentile alike—comes out in his depiction of the life of Christ. He is not just the Saviour of the sons of Abraham but all the sons of Adam as noted in the genealogy in **Luke 4**.

Luke chronicles events not found in the other gospel accounts.

For example, Luke records five great exclamations of singing: Elizabeth's thanksgiving, Mary's joyous praise of God, Zechariah's exuberant prophecy, the angels' annunciation of Christ's birth to the shepherds, and Simeon's verse of appreciation for living to see the Messiah.

Along with Matthew, Luke commonly uses the term "*Son of Man*" in reference to Jesus. He provides detailed accounts of Christ's birth, infancy and childhood to illustrate that he was born, grew and matured like any other human. He shows Jesus doing things the rest of humanity does all the time: praying, learning, eating, sleeping, weeping and giving comfort.

Even His parables, as described by Luke, have a very human touch.

## Parables in Luke's Gospel

#	Parable Name	Scripture	Only in Luke	Meaning
1	The Two Debtors	Luke 7:36-50	✿	No money to pay
2	The Sower	Luke 8:4-15		Christ the Sower of the Word
3	The Good Samaritan	Luke 10:25-37	✿	Christ the only Answer
4	The Foolish Rich Man	Luke 12:16-21	✿	No thought of God-foolish
5	The Barren Fig Tree	Luke 13:6-9		Man-no fruit for God
6	The Grain of Mustard Seed	Luke 13:18, 19		Outer view of man's work
7	The Woman & the Leaven	Luke 13:20-21		Inside view of man's work
8	The Great Supper	Luke 14:16-24		The heart of God
9	The Lost Sheep	Luke 15:4-9	✿	All lost but God loves, seeks, finds and rejoices
10	The Lost Piece of Money	Luke 15:8-10		
11	The Prodigal Son	Luke 15:11-32		
12	The Unjust Steward	Luke 16:1-13	✿	We must serve God with all He has given us
13	The Rich Man and Lazarus	Luke 16:19-31	✿	Present loss for eternal gain and visa-versa
14	The Unjust Judge	Luke 18:1-8	✿	The importunity of Prayer
15	The Pharisee & Publican	Luke 18:9-14	✿	Repentance not works
16	The Pounds	Luke 19:11-27		Our responsibility to God
17	The Wicked Husbandman	Luke 20:9-16	✿	Man's collective failure in responsibility

## PAUL'S BELOVED PHYSICIAN AND THE ACTS OF THE HOLY GHOST

Luke's immediate service to God's people comes as Paul's personal "*beloved physician*" **Colossians 4:14**. Paul frequently needed a doctor's ministrations! Jesus stated, as recorded by Luke, that the sick need a physician **Luke 5:31**.

In **II Corinthians 11:23-28** Paul relates how often he was beaten and whipped and/or imprisoned and he goes on to say he was once stoned and left for dead. We could also add to this list being shipwrecked three times and Paul's

consequent exposure. One time he spent a whole night and a day trying not to drown **II Corinthians 11:25**. No doubt, Luke's trained hands and caring presence helped Paul recover from many of these severe beatings, open wounds and infections.

It is no wonder Paul calls Luke the "beloved" physician! Luke may also have attended to Paul's "*thorn in the flesh*" (**II Corinthians 12:7**) and his illness while among the Galatians. (**Galatians 4:13-14**).

Luke never mentions himself by name even once in the Acts though he was obviously a witness to many of the events. The closest he comes is to say "we" in several places **Acts 16:10-17; 20:6-16 and 21:27-28**.

In the biblical narrative, Luke appears suddenly but unobtrusively among Paul's companions in Troas. **Acts 16:8-11** is written in such a way that the language changes from the third-person singular, "he," speaking of Paul alone, to the first-person plural, "we," when Luke joins in after he met Paul in Troas, possibly for the first time.

#### FOUR "WE" SECTIONS IN THE ACTS OF THE HOLY GHOST

1. In **Acts 16: 10 to 16:24**, during Paul's second missionary journey, Luke uses the word 'we,' showing that he was then with the apostle Paul at **Troas**, and then accompanied him to **Philippi**, where apparently Luke appears to have remained.
2. In **Acts 20:5 to 21:19** during the third missionary journey Luke again states 'we' and went with Paul to **Jerusalem**.
3. Paul then became a prisoner in Caesarea for more than two years, and we lose sight of Luke; but as soon as Paul was about to be sent to **Rome**, Luke was with him again (**Acts 27:1 to 28:31**) and accompanied him to Rome and was there with Paul when he wrote the Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon (**Phile. 24; Col. 4:14**).
4. He was also with Paul after his release and during his second imprisonment when others had forsaken the aged apostle Paul, Luke alone remained - "*only Luke is with me.*" (**2 Tim. 4:11**). He was Paul's beloved fellow-labourer, and in his own writings he has skillfully hidden himself that the work of God by His servant Paul and others might, by the leading of the Holy Spirit, be faithfully recorded, and come into prominence.

Luke's later years were spent in Paul's company away from Philippi: on the way to Jerusalem, at Caesarea, during the voyage to Rome and of course in Rome itself and he is with Paul in Rome as he writes Colossians and Philemon. Luke is not only a physician to Paul, but he also becomes his personal assistant and secretary.

We also know that after and during Paul's second Roman imprisonment Luke is Paul's sole companion for a time. Note what Paul asks Timothy, in **II Timothy 4:9-12**.

*"Be diligent to come to me quickly; for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry. And Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus."*

This is the last letter of Paul. He is "*already being poured out as a drink offering*" **verse 6**. He could have felt totally abandoned by his human friends—except for Luke's presence. Luke's devotion to Paul during this dangerous time is nothing short of beautiful and inspiring. Paul, though a deeply converted man of faith, is also human and appreciates having a companion who never gives up and never leaves him. Luke is truly a "God-send" for Paul in his darkest hours before his execution.

It is possible that Luke pens, by inspiration, his gospel during Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea. Some describe his writing as painting with word pictures (**Acts 23:12-22**).

This presence of Luke with Paul during his imprisonment, combined with the narrator's use of the word "we" throughout his accounts of Paul's imprisonment, provide conclusive evidence of Luke's authorship.

From all this we know that Luke was a humble man, who comes to know and love his Saviour intimately. He finds it an honor to serve the great apostle, Paul, and prefers to keep the spotlight on others—and off himself although we find him unafraid in his devotion to stand by Paul, when others are getting out while they can.

Evident in his writings is a constant awareness of God's providence for His servants, an awareness that reveals itself in his vignettes that show God's care and love for the sick and needy.

Luke's writing style in his gospel reveals his deep affection for the Lord Jesus in a very personal way, though he never had the opportunity to meet Him firsthand. His stories are full of vivid details to allow the reader to be able to experience rather than merely read for he wants his readers to come to know the Saviour just as deeply as he has.

No one knows for sure how Luke's life ended. We know he was not martyred with Paul in Rome since he wrote the book of Acts long after that terrible moment. No one knows whether he was martyred later or died a natural death. Regardless, Luke's work lives on, inspiring us today, almost 2,000 years later.

We thank God for Luke, the beloved physician. What an example for us of one who loved our Lord Jesus Christ and presents Him in all His loveliness as Man dwelling among people, eating with the sinners who He came to seek and to save.

Luke always hides himself behind his Lord and also behind the apostle Paul, acknowledging the Lord's servant as he feels comfortable working behind the scenes, but serving with courage, and using all that God has given him (**Luke 19:11-27**).

May we be inspired by Luke's life and selflessness to serve our Lord Jesus and those He loves in these very last days before He comes for us!