

Luke and Paul

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Dr. Luke and Paul were companions, brothers serving the Lord Jesus Christ. They traveled together, faced adversities together and labored to promote truth. Both wrote extensive portions of our New Testaments. They both understood Paul's unique good-news (gospel), they both understood the basic dispensations, and both had a good grasp of what the future had in store for Gentiles as well as Israel. However, they also had separate ministries! Though members of the same heavenly body of Christ, they differed as do all saints:

For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. I Corinthians 12:12-14

Dr. Luke wrote both the Gospel of Luke and Acts to and for Israelites. The two books were also written for us today as well, yet not specifically "to" us. Paul wrote specifically to and for us today, as well as to and for the Christians of his day (which is part of this same dispensation—the Church Age or the Dispensation of Grace). Paul was not sent to minister to Israel with their gospel of the Kingdom, or the good-news of circumcision; instead he preached HIS gospel, the good-news of UNcircumcision. In mid-Acts, we see Paul's gospel in action, though it is not Dr. Luke's task to expose the particulars of Paul's gospel and revelations (details about the heavenly Body of Christ). In Acts 13, Luke did illustrate some of the contents of Paul's gospel, but only in a historical preview. Luke writes as concerns the Gospel of the Kingdom (Luke 4:43 et al). Thus their writing ministries did differ!

It is not clear in the Bible as to the nationality of Dr. Luke. Some just suppose from the punctuation of Colossians 4:11-14 that Luke was a

Gentile, however the punctuation is variable. It is possible that Luke was a Gentile, but I am more inclined to suspect that he was a Jew or a proselyte to Judaism. When Paul and Luke did travel together no mention is made of the need to circumcise Luke, nor to submit Luke to the Jewish ritual of water baptism. Now to Timothy and others, Paul did perform these rituals, but only to hinder the Jews in their attacks upon him and his ministry. I find it interesting that Luke is nowhere mentioned as needing any of these Jewish certifications. In Acts 16:20, Paul and Silas are referred to as "Jews", yet is Dr. Luke included in this group? This is just after a "we" section in Acts. It seems that somewhere in this scene in Acts 16, Luke separates, as the account of the jail situation seems to not include Dr. Luke.

In Acts 21:18-25, we read of Paul AND Luke meeting with the Jerusalem church and leaders. The Jewish leaders complain about Paul's non-Jewish aspects, but not Luke's. Perhaps Luke was not their focus, but I do find it curious that Dr. Luke is nowhere hounded by the zealots of Judaism as was Paul and others. Which inclines me to think that Dr. Luke was not a Gentile.

In light of what Dr. Luke and Paul mutually experienced and shared, their different ministries seem remarkable. They did so much together, yet Dr. Luke focuses his writing efforts for the Jews, and Paul focuses upon the Body of Christ (both Gentile and Jew). One wonders how they got along so well! Certainly Luke did share Paul's gospel as Acts 16: 9, 10 indicates:

And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a certain man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. [The "the" before "gospel" does not exist in the Greek, a common NASB error]

Indeed, it is known that some dispensationalists declare that in Acts (up to chapter 28), Paul did preach the same Jewish gospel as did the 12. But as Paul labors to prove in his epistles, this is not the case. What they preached in Acts 16 was Paul's gospel, even if Paul "covers" that fact before Agrippa in Acts 26. It is reasonable to assume that here in Acts 16, Luke preached the

very same gospel as did Paul. A message of salvation for the Gentiles as well, but not through the agency of Israel. Now the Gentiles learn of salvation, despite Israel!

At this point it may be helpful to remind readers that despite some of the popular interpretations, Paul does not actually preach that the Jews are to anticipate a coming Millennial Kingdom. Paul does not prepare any of his Jewish audiences to enter the coming Kingdom or to be prepared to experience the coming tribulation, nor to meet a coming Messiah. All of which are elements of the "Kingdom Gospel". However, Paul does preach to Jews that Jesus is the Messiah, and he does preach about the Kingdom. For example:

Acts 17:3

explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and *saying*, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ." [spoken in the Jewish synagogue]

Acts 18:5

But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul *began* devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

Acts 19:8

And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading *them* about things related to the kingdom of God. [per the Textus Receptus text]

In the above and similar passages [concerning Acts 20:25, see "end note"] some suppose that Paul was indeed focusing upon the dispersed Jews and was proclaiming the "Kingdom Gospel". Yet this is not the case. Typically he did enter into the synagogues when venturing into a new area, as this provided him with a "pulpit". And typically, the Jews rebelled against his message that Jesus was/is the Messiah. In fact in each of the three samples above, the Jews reacted violently to his message. And typically, after each rejection scene, Paul focused upon the Gentiles (and whatever few Jews who did believe!).

It was because of the presence of Jews in the area, that Paul; performed signs, wonders, did baptize, performed circumcisions *et al.* These associated signs and rituals appeased the Jews, and provided some safety for the new converts (such as those in Acts 19:1-7). Luke accurately records all of these events and situations, as matters of history. No where does Luke declare that Paul promoted the Millennial Kingdom as an anticipated event, nor does Paul expect the return to earth of the King Jesus any time soon. In Paul's epistles we find—in detail—the contents of his special "gospel" which he calls "my gospel".

So why does Luke write for and to the Jews, and seems to ignore the Pauline distinctions in his two books? Luke followed and served Paul, and Luke apparently preached the same gospel as did Paul, but his two books do NOT promote the Pauline revelations, nor Paul's distinctive gospel. Because of this some folks fail to recognize when Paul's revelations and ministry began. In assimilating Luke and Paul, they would attempt to divide Paul's ministry into two sections: ¹

- (1) His ministry prior to Acts 28 (which would mean preaching of the Kingdom Gospel, the same gospel as preached by the 12)
- (2) His ministry after Acts 28 (which means teaching about the heavenly Body of Christ and its good-news)

However, when the Bible student reads Paul's epistles written before Acts 28 (pre A.D. 64), we find Paul's gospel unfolding, its distinctions being clear: note Romans 16:25, 26, Romans 11: 25-32, II Thessalonians 2:13-15, I Thessalonians 4:13-18, I Corinthians 1:23, 24, I Corinthians 3:16, I Corinthians 6:15-20 and I Corinthians 12:27; these all promote and make clear that Paul was teaching and preaching the mysteries revealed to him. He

¹ For example note the comments Charles Welch makes in his volume titled: *Dispensational Truth*, published circa 1910. Welch used such thinking to influence the elderly E.W. Bullinger, and the latter years of Bullinger became corrupted, contaminated by Welch's influence which influence also impacted Bullinger's Companion Bible.

spoke of or about the gospel, that good-news which he calls MY GOSPEL (or, "my good-news") in each of these pre A.D. 64 epistles. Though Paul teaches progressively and cumulatively, he only taught one gospel.

Whenever Paul went to Israelites first, it was only to clearly and prophetically demonstrate their REJECTION of his good-news about Gentile salvation and Who the Lord Jesus Christ is (the Messiah). This rejection of Paul's message by the Jews is repeated over and over in the book of Acts, as illustrated in the above three samples. It bears repeating that after each rejection scene, Paul is openly received by the Gentiles (and even a few Jews).

Luke's writing ministry was to and for Israel, as designed by God. Below are some reasons why I believe Luke looked back and wrote to the Israelites of his day, even though he was active in Paul's ministry:

- Paul was commissioned to preach his special gospel, he is THE Apostle (singular) to the Gentiles. Luke is not so commissioned.
- Luke therefore is/was free to function differently. Being educated he developed into a good writer/historian. God inspired Dr. Luke to write what he wrote. His written historical accounts do not violate any commission.
- Paul, though burdened for his own countrymen, was not commissioned to write to and for the Israelites. His writings are also for Israelites who accept his offer of grace and redemption, in which case they ceased being earthly-oriented Jews, they would then become members of the heavenly Body of Christ church.
- Someone had to connect Matthew, Mark and John (and Luke) with Romans. Imagine reading the gospels, and after the last chapter of John, turning the page and seeing the epistle to the ROMANS! The shift from Israelites to uncircumcised Gentiles would make absolutely no sense had not the transitional book of Acts been placed where it is, after the Gospel accounts and before the Pauline epistles. In Acts, Dr. Luke shows the rejection of Israel and the historical accounts of the

beginnings of the mission to the nations, despite Israel's rejection of Paul's message.

- Dr. Luke is not promoting the obsolete Kingdom good-news in Acts (though he does in his other account, *Luke*), nor is he competing with Paul's then emerging good-news; rather he is simply performing the important function of demonstrating the historical facts of transition.

When Jesus Christ was with His apostles, He did not tell them that their ministry to first win Jerusalem, then Judea, then Samaria then unto the uttermost parts of the earth (note the widening ministry) would fail. Acts 1:8. He knew they would fail, and He knew that He would raise up Paul and send him out of Israel. Jesus allowed His apostles to experience the rejection, which rejection was necessary as it was the mechanism which opened the door of grace to all of the nations! (note **Romans 11:11, 12**)

Note the words in Acts 3:19-21 as spoken by Peter to Israel:

Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.

Israel did not repent. The book of Acts makes it clear that stubborn Israel rejected their Messiah and His Apostles. Thus God temporarily has rejected Israel. Via this rejection, the door swung open for all of the nations, including any individual Israelites. (again, Romans 11).

So Dr. Luke was not competing with Paul; Dr. Luke did preach with Paul the same good-news which Paul preached. Yet, Dr. Luke was also moved by God to record events and to write such in his two books, *Luke* and *Acts*.

Luke was apparently a friend of the mother of Jesus (Mary), and he surely knew many of the apostles. If, however, he did not actually know

Mary, and did not experience much of the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, then the information and unique details he provides *obviously* were provided directly by God. He had heard of the teachings of the earthly Jesus of Nazareth, yet his gospel book gives certain details lacking in the other synoptics. Clearly (at least to me), Luke's primary source was the Holy Spirit! His gospel is not based upon Mark or Matthew, or any of the later appearing apocryphal gospels. It is not surprising that God chose Luke to record all of the material which he did. Luke's gospel nicely supplements the other synoptics, it adds much data, and gives us a view of the human side of the God-Man, Jesus Christ.

Luke and Paul worked together, and as Luke was a solid companion to Paul, he was also a writer of two great historical and Divinely Inspired documents. Luke was not commissioned to reveal Paul's revelations, that was specifically Paul's task. Though Paul did only preach his one gospel, he did teach about the Kingdom (Acts 19:8, 20:25, see end note) but this teaching about the Kingdom should not be confused with promoting the gospel of the Kingdom.

Luke performed well, he preserved for posterity Paul's commissioning, Paul's travels (up to his first Roman imprisonment) and clearly showed the universal rejection by the Jews of Israel and elsewhere of Paul's teaching. Luke was quite capable of multi-tasking without any conflicts. Paul had obvious difficulty writing, Luke did not. Paul's task was clearly limited, Luke was not so limited.

Luke performed the *needed* function of informing Israelites, via written record, of the transition from the Kingdom hopes of Israel, to the new dispensation of the church. It has been written, and so it is.

END NOTE

In Acts 20:25, the Greek text presents a number of variations, concerning what Paul heralded or preached: Basically the variations are:

- (1) ...heralding (or announcing) the kingdom of (or, about or from) Jesus
- (2) ...heralding (or announcing) the kingdom of (or, about or from) God
- (3) ...heralding the gospel of (or, about or from) God
- (4) ...heralding (or announcing) the kingdom

In my mind, #3 seems to be the best option in light of Paul's activities. "Herald-ing" is often used synonymously for "preaching". Manuscripts reading #3, would be: 323, 945, 1739, 1891. It is not the most popular reading, as it reads "gospel" for the usual "kingdom", yet it also smacks of originality. The phrase "gospel of (from or about) God" is used elsewhere in Romans 15:16, Mark 1:14, I Thessalonians 2:2, 8, 9. It also occurs as a variant reading in several other texts. It is not foreign to Paul, and in Acts 20:25, Luke is quoting Paul.

Paul does preach about the Kingdom (Acts 28:31, 19:8). But as Cornelius Stam aptly states:

Since that time [Acts chapter 3:19-21, et cetera] Israel had rejected Messiah and His reign, hence when Paul, in Rome, preached "the kingdom of God and...those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ," [Acts 28:31] he would naturally explain how Christ had been rejected, so that the *earthly establishment* of the kingdom of God was now held in abeyance, while God sent to a sin-cursed world a wondrous message of grace;

quote from: *Acts Dispensationally Considered*. Cornelius R. Stam. volume IV, page 224. Published by the Berean Bible Society, 1985.

Indeed, the Pauline epistles verify that this is how Paul preached about the Kingdom of God, not as a soon expected occurrence. Rather Paul taught why it will be delayed! (Recall, that the "inner" or spiritual Kingdom of God, is another use of the phrase—in Acts and in this paper—we are reflecting upon the 1,000 year Millennial earthly Kingdom of God).