

Luke

Preached by Phil Kayser at DCC on 2020-05-17

Introduction - why it is critical to understand the identity of the author (Luke) and the recipient (“most excellent Theophilus”)

So far in the Gospels we have seen that Matthew portrays Jesus as King and Mark portrays Him as the Servant of the Lord described in Isaiah 40-53. And each of those two Gospels is crafted with a very specific audience in mind. Matthew was written to Jews by a Jew and is Jewish to the core of its makeup. Mark was also written by a Jew, but he was a Jew who wrote to Romans with Roman idioms, Roman time, Roman vocabulary, and explained anything non-Roman very carefully. It is obvious from the way Mark was written that it was written to a Roman audience.

We would expect Luke to be similarly crafted to perfectly meet the needs of the recipient. On my view it is. But on the three other views there are conundrums - major conundrums. If (as some people assume) it is purely a Jewish book written to Jews as a group rather than to an individual, then a lot of the book does not make sense. If it is written by a Gentile to a Gentile audience, there are even more things that do not make sense - far more things. So the issue of audience and writer has been a puzzle to many. And it is such an important puzzle to solve, that I am going to spend half of the sermon solving this puzzle. And then we will race through a bird's eye view of the book in light of what we have learned. So the first 25 minutes or so is going to be taking you on a sleuthing mission.

First of all, let me start off by listing the four theories that you are likely to run across:

1. The first theory is that Luke is a Gentile who writes to some unknown Roman official.
2. The second theory is that Luke is a Gentile who writes to the Gentile church at large (with the name Theophilus simply meaning friend of God and referring to any Christian).
3. The third theory is that Luke is a Jew who writing to the Jewish church, with the name “Theophilus” again meaning anyone who loved God.
4. And fourth, my view (and the view of a growing minority of scholars) is that Luke was a Jewish Levite who was writing a defense of Christianity to the well-known former high priest, Theophilus. Some of those who hold to this theory do not believe he was converted. I believe that Theophilus had been newly converted to the faith and would hopefully use his position and the book of Acts to defend Christianity. Let's eliminate the alternative views.

Exegetically two of the views are simply not possible. You can't take the audience as being anything other than a literal individual civil officer by the name of Theophilus. Luke 1:3 makes that clear. The title “most excellent” is a very technical title that the first century

readers would have had one and only one understanding of. So that rules out the two views that make the audience the church at large.

But what about the majority view? The majority of scholars believe that Luke was a Gentile and that Theophilus was an unknown Gentile civic officer - likely a Greek, but possibly a Roman.¹ They base this primarily on the fact that Luke is written with superb Greek, approaching the level of the classical Greek of the scholars. Second, Luke is missing a handful of the Semitisms that other Biblical authors had used. He's got plenty of his own Semitisms, so that seems like a strange argument. And third, some of them still have a misreading of Colossians 4:10-14 where they at least used to think that Luke was excluded from the list of the circumcised who worked with Paul. But John Wenham, R. Strelan, David Allen, and quite a number of other scholars have completely disposed of the last proof and shown how it raises irreconcilable contradictions.²

Which means that the main reason to hold that it was a Gentile who wrote this book is that it is written with the most polished Greek of the New Testament - in places approximating the classical Greek of the scholars. This has made the majority of scholars still assume (and it is an assumption, and only an assumption) that it must have been written by a sophisticated Greek scholar to a sophisticated Greek audience. And Luke (being a physician) would qualify as a sophisticated scholar.

But others point out that the book of Hebrews is just as polished in its Greek. Luke, Acts and Hebrews have the same kind of polished Greek, and no one believes that Hebrews was written by a Gentile. In fact I have a book that devotes 87 pages of small print to giving detailed linguistic parallels between Hebrews, Luke, and Acts.³ It is one of the most compelling arguments I have read that the author of Luke and Acts has to be the same author as the author of Hebrews. And so today I am really giving the introduction to Luke, Acts, and Hebrews. I think the evidence in that chapter is stunning. And that is just one argument out of many in the 400 page book that identifies the author of Hebrews with the author of Acts and Luke. With John Calvin and others I have always held to this because of certain Biblical presuppositions, but in the last decade the evidence that has been unearthed is now overwhelming - at least in my opinion.

But there is still the puzzle of audience because this book is almost like a mixture of Matthew and Mark. When we get to John we will see a very deliberate progression on audience from Matthew, to Mark, to Luke, to John. But let's just deal with the first three

¹ Perhaps the best arguments for this position have been gathered by J. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, AB 28 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1981), pp. 35-62.

² John Wenham, "The Identification of Luke," *EVQ* 63 (1991): 3-44. R. Strelan, *Luke the Priest: the Authority of the Author of the Third Gospel* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009). David Allen, *The Lukan Authorship of Hebrews* (Nashville: Academic, 2010).

³ David Allen, *The Lukan Authorship of Hebrews* (Nashville: Academic, 2010).

Gospels. Every detail of Matthew and Mark was tailored to their respective audiences. You would expect the same to be true of Luke. On my view it is. On the other three views it is not.

If this book was written to Jews in general (like Matthew was), then here are five troubling questions:

1. Why does he use sophisticated scholarly Greek that most Jews and most Jewish Christians would likely struggle with? If he is writing to a scholarly Jew, not problem. That's my view. But if he is writing to your average Jewish Christian (as this view holds), then there is a problem.
2. Why does it trace Christ's genealogy back to Adam? The writer is showing Jesus to be the promised seed of Eve and as restoring everything lost by Adam. There seems to be at least some Gentile focus there.
3. Why does it emphasize Christ's conversion of Gentiles (like Mark does)?
4. Why does it show Christ's worldwide focus of the Good News?
5. Why is Christ presented as the Son of Man in every chapter? That phrase occurs 25 times.

I think each of those questions need to be answered. I think they are perfectly answered on my view, but not on the Jewish church view.

But there are far more serious questions if you think this book was written by a Gentile to a Gentile audience. Whereas Mark (which was written to Romans) used Roman timing to communicate with Romans, Luke uses Jewish time, which would have totally confused Romans and Greeks if Gentiles were indeed his audience. And unlike Mark, who carefully explains any idioms or Jewish customs that his readers might possibly misunderstand, Luke leaves all kinds of idioms and customs that Gentiles would not have understood totally unexplained. In fact, his Jewish explanations only make sense if the audience is Jewish. Just one example: In Acts 1:12 he refers to the distance traveled as being "a Sabbath day's journey." He's not quoting somebody. He himself is explaining to the reader how far away they were - something that only Jews would understand. If he was a Gentile writing to a Gentile audience, his explanation of how far it was would have been no explanation whatsoever. It is clear that Luke is not adapting his language to Gentiles as Mark had done. And there are dozens of such examples that could be given.

So those are the first three theories that don't make sense. It doesn't make sense to say that Luke was written to Jews in general or to Gentiles in general. And it doesn't make sense to say that it was written to a Gentile civic officer.

In your notes you will see that the fourth solution is to say that Luke was a Jewish priest or Levite who was writing to the former high priest, Theophilus, who had been a very pro-Roman Sadducee, but who later got converted, and still had huge influence among both the

Jews and the Romans. This explains both the pro-Roman emphasis that many detect and the pro-Jewish emphasis that others detect. And we will see other evidences that this is a perfect fit. Let me first prove that Luke was a Jew.

First, Romans 3:2 says that God had entrusted the writings of all Scripture to the circumcision - "to them was entrusted the oracles of God." The argument is that only the circumcised descendants of Abraham wrote any books of the Bible. That means Luke could not be the one lone exception. He too must be a circumcised descendant of Abraham (and Abraham is the context). I wouldn't hang a lot on that argument personally, but Jonathan Sarfati thinks it is a cogent argument as do a number of other scholars.

Second, (and I think this is much more significant) Ramsay and others prove from the ancient papyri that Lucius and Luke are names used interchangeably to refer to the same person. One name is the more formal one and the other name is more informal (sort of like the difference between Robert and Bob, or John and Johnny). This discovery has made many commentators realize that Paul's mysterious associate whose name is "Lucius" in Romans 16:21 is actually *not* an unknown mysterious associate at all. He is Luke. If this is true, then it is a slam dunk that Luke was a Jew because Romans 16:21 clearly identifies Lucius as a Jew. This identification is confirmed by two other facts. First, there is no evidence of a different Lucius who worked with Paul. Second (and more significant), the list of names in Romans 16:21 is parallel to the list of names of the men who traveled with Paul in Acts 20:4-5. When Paul gives the list, he names Lucius. When Luke gives the same list, Lucius is left out, but he includes himself with the word "us." So those parallels would seem to indicate that Luke saw himself as being Lucius. If that explanation is not accepted, then it is strange that Paul leaves Luke out of the list since Luke was clearly there with Paul. Allen, Ramsay, and others give a lot of other exegetical details for believing that the Scripture clearly calls Luke a Jew. I think this is sufficient evidence, but there is more.

The third proof given by those who hold this theory is that not a single church father thought Luke was a Gentile - at least not in print that we know of. And Allen demonstrates that. The one possible exception is actually proved to be the opposite. So our interpretation is the historic one.

Fourth, the language of Acts 21-22 shows that Luke was an eyewitness of Paul's arrest in the temple. Since Gentiles were not allowed in that part of the temple, it is clear that Luke could not have been a Gentile. He was there. This is further confirmed by the fact that when the Jews arrested Paul, they gave as their reason for arresting him that he had brought a Gentile into the temple. But who is the one they identify as a Gentile? Not Luke, but Trophimus. If Luke was a well-known Levite (as I believe he was), then they would never think of him as a Gentile. I think it is hard to explain this evidence unless he was a Jew.

Fifth, Luke's intimate knowledge of the temple and its liturgy are so detailed that many have not only assumed that Luke was a Jew; they have assumed that he had to have been a

Levite.⁴ And there is an ancient church tradition that Luke was a Levite. I think the evidence is quite strong that Luke was indeed a Levite. We'll get to that evidence when we get to the book of Hebrews. And if he was a Levite, it also makes sense that he would have known Theophilus personally.

Sixth, I've already mentioned that Luke uses explanations that only a Jew would understand, such as a Sabbath day's journey.

Seventh, in my additional notes I will show many Hebraic forms of speech known as Semitisms or Hebraisms that non-Hebrew Greeks would not be familiar with.⁵ Those who argue that Luke was a Gentile have said that Luke probably got those Semitisms from the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament (much like those of us who grew up on the King James will sometimes unwittingly use King James language). But several recent scholars have proved that many of the Semitisms used by Luke are not found in the Septuagint and could only come from a writer whose first language was Hebrew.⁶ This

⁴ R. Strelan, *Luke the Priest: the Authority of the Author of the Third Gospel* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009).

⁵ Some examples of Semitisms follow: A) redundant uses of "saying" (Luke 14:3; 24:6-7). B) On "contrast by extremes," Hebraic scholar Michael D. Marlowe said, "Luke's version preserves the Hebraic style, Matthew's the Greek. C) Another idiom, "the use of positive adjective for the comparative or superlative" in Luke 5:39 ("good" = "better") D) on the introductory, "it came to pass," Marlowe says, "This Semitism appears far more frequently in Luke's writings than elsewhere (Mark has only four examples of it). An example is Luke 2:6, "And it came to pass (egeneto de) that while they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth." Recognizing the unnaturalness of the expression, most modern translations begin simply, "While they were there" (see GNB, NIV, JB, NEB, RSV). For other examples of this idiom, see Luke 2:1, 2:6, 2:15, 3:21, 5:1, 5:12, 5:17, 6:1, 6:6, 6:12, 7:11, 8:1, 8:22, 9:18, 9:28, 9:37, 9:51, 11:1, 11:27, 14:1, 17:11, 18:35, 20:1, 22:24, 24:4. E) Adjectival substitutes (Luke 10:6). F) Future indicative used as an imperative (Luke 1:13). G) verb and cognate noun expressing emphasis (Luke 22:15), H) Parallelism (Luke 1-2 - though this could simply be an example of faithful reporting of Hebraism), I) the use of idou (behold) in Luke 1:20, 31, 36; 2:25; Acts 12:7), J) the use of pleonasm (Luke 15:18; Acts 5:17), K) transliterations, etc.

⁶ Though J. Munk claims that the Semitisms in Luke-Acts are actually Septuagintisms, R. Steven Notley (of the Jerusalem School) responded by saying, "If the Semitism of Luke 11:20 is a result of Luke's imitation of the Septuagint's style, as most scholars claim, then how is it that Luke's idiom is more Hebraic than the Septuagint upon which he supposedly relies? The evidence suggests that this is not a Septuagintism but, in Blass and Debrunner's words, a "translation-Semitism." Luke's text seems to rest upon a literal translation of a Hebrew source." Another writer said, "Their only argument against the plethora of Semitisms in Luke is that Luke is "Septuagintalizing" his Greek, never mind the fact that many of the Semitisms don't even occur once in the Septuagint."

writer thinks like a Hebrew. The language shows that this writer was Hebrew through and through. And David Allen's 2010 book is one of many new studies that I believe are permanently burying the idea that Luke was a Gentile.⁷ I think that idea will eventually go the way of the Dodo bird.

There are a lot more arguments. It was common for Levites to specialize in medicine. Likewise there is an ancient church tradition that Luke was one of the seventy that Jesus commissioned in Luke 10. I won't get into other arguments, but I think it is crystal clear that Luke was at least a Jew. Now, that is currently a minority opinion, but more and more evangelical scholars are changing their minds on this because it answers so many conundrums of the alternative theory.

And who was he writing to? This is what really opens up the book. Luke 1:3 and Acts 1:1 tells us clearly. He calls the recipient, "most excellent Theophilus." And the author expected first century readers to know who he is talking about. Let's parse that title a bit and try to narrow down the identification.

The words "most excellent" show that he is clearly a ruler or a former ruler. Only rulers or former rulers had that title used of them. Well, that narrows the candidates quite quickly. A search through ancient literature shows that there were only two categories of people that had this title ascribed to them: 1) Roman civil officials and 2) high priests and/or former high priests of the Jerusalem temple who were Sadducees appointed by Rome and loyal to Rome; they ruled on behalf of Rome. Those looking for a Gentile candidate have searched in vain for such a figure during the time that Luke wrote this Gospel. There is no Roman candidate who bore the name of Theophilus who could have had this book written to him - unless you date this book much later than the Bible allows it to be dated.

But there *was* a *high priest* by the name of Theophilus who bore that title. Josephus tells us a fair bit about him, and he fits the Theophilus of this book and of Acts quite well. His Hebrew name was John (or Yohannan) and his Greek name was Theophilus (which means friend of God). Josephus uses both names, but calls him "Theophilus" five times. He was in the office of high priest from AD 37-41, but was deposed from office by King Herod. Josephus is clear that he continued to be a very influential leader of the people up until AD 66, even heading up an army. And that latter reference shows that there must have been a rift between him and his high priestly family. I believe that it was his conversion that led to that rift. I won't get into that here.

But David Allen gives several lines of evidence to show that Theophilus became a Christian prior to this book being written and continued to be a leader with connections to both Jews and Romans for the next nine years. He was in a vulnerable spot, but a very influential spot. And throughout that time it would be the most natural thing for all people who addressed him to continue to address him with the title, "most excellent Theophilus." Any Jew of the first century would have immediately recognized who Luke was writing to. There was only one candidate who fits. And since he was a Jew writing to a Jewish person, with Jewish

⁷ David Allen, *The Lukan Authorship of Hebrews* (Nashville: Academic, 2010).

tinged scholarly Greek, this is almost a slam dunk. And as a Levite, Luke would have had huge connections with Theophilus.

If this Theophilus is the same Theophilus, as seems very probable to me, then it explains a lot. It explains the remarkable emphasis upon angels and resurrection throughout Luke and Acts since Sadducees did not believe in angels, spirits, or a resurrection. It explains Luke's inclusion of the Rich Man and Lazarus story, since Sadducees did not believe in a conscious afterlife or in hell. It explains Luke's constant emphasis upon God's divine sovereignty over history (something they also denied). They failed to have a Biblical worldview. It also explains Luke's constant emphasis upon the Holy Spirit's role in redemptive history. It explains why Luke proves most of his points from the Pentateuch - since the Sadducees only accepted the Pentateuch. If Theophilus was going to influence fellow Sadducees, this would have been a great apologetic tactic. In addition, as David Allen points out, Luke and Acts are perfect manuals to wash away every vestige of false Sadducean training that Theophilus had grown up with and to further ground him in the true faith and in a true biblical worldview. Luke 1:4 shows that this ruler had already been instructed in the Christian faith, but Luke was writing these things to more thoroughly ground him in the true faith - "that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed."

Many scholars have shown that Luke also had a purpose of providing court evidence to defend Christianity, and that Acts had the added purpose of defending the apostle Paul in court. Now granted, those writers are assuming that this was written much later in order to defend Paul from *Roman* persecution and in a Roman court. There are several problems with their thesis. The first and most obvious problem is that the writer was trained in classical Greek and would have been totally capable of leaving out all Hebraisms that would have confused Gentile officials in a Roman court, but he does not leave them out. He deliberately keeps them in. Here's the point: *the language of Luke and Acts shows that those books are not adapted to Roman courts*. That is clear. The books have way too many Hebraisms for that to work. Even though Luke uses polished academic Greek that is perfect for a courtroom, it is just as obvious from the Hebraisms that it isn't a Gentile court. It is a Jewish courtroom that this is designed for.

Second, *Rome* was *not* persecuting Paul when either Luke or Acts were written - the *Jews* were the only ones engaged in that persecution. In the book of Acts, the Romans were actually standing up for Paul. It isn't until a couple years after Acts is written that Rome began persecuting Christians. Allen shows how the same evidence that previous scholars pointed to for a courtroom can be used to show that Luke-Acts is an apologetic treatise that Theophilus could have used to defend Christianity (and through the book of Acts) to defend Paul against the irrational hatred that the Sadducees and other leaders of Israel had shown. They were the chief persecutors of the church. And as an influential leader in Israel, Theophilus was well connected, and could use these two books to help to alleviate some of the persecution.

This would also explain why over half of the individual conversions mentioned in the book of Acts, were conversions of political figures. The Sadducees were very pro-Roman, and this evidence of Roman government officials being converted to Christianity could put a bit of

the fear of God into the Sadducees. They were trying to use Roman courts to persecute Christians when their own courts were unsuccessful, and knowing that Roman government officials were supportive of Christianity would dampen that zeal. Sadducees held office at Roman discretion, and they didn't want to alienate Roman governors. So there is an apologetic aspect to these books that is brilliant.

This also explains why Luke-Acts can be argued to be both pro-Jew (as some commentaries portray it) and pro-Roman (as other commentaries argue). Both are true. Luke had an objective to show that Jesus was the Savior of both Jew and Gentile, and the Sadducean leaders uniquely bridged the gap between Jew and Roman. So you can see the natural progression from Matthew (purely Jewish), to Mark (written to the growing Roman church), to Luke (who is defending Christianity to the pro-Roman Sadducean leaders), to John (which by that time treats Israel as apostate and is written as a covenant lawsuit against Israel and declaring that God is moving to the Gentiles).

I know this was a very long introduction, and it means that I will have to sail through the rest of the book. But I believe it will help you to much better understand Luke, Acts and Hebrews. Let's give a brief overview of at least how this book is being used as a legal brief that court officials would be required to read before pronouncing their judgment - otherwise they would look like hypocrites. I think this is so cool how God got civil officers to read Luke and Acts.

Overview of Luke - the Gospel that portrays Jesus as the Son of Man

And let's start with Luke's bringing of numerous witnesses who would have been very credible witnesses to the Sadducees, who ran the temple.

Credible Testimonies to Jesus being the Son of Man (1:1-4:13)

The Temple's testimony to the Son of Man (1-2)

Luke (a learned Levite) is convinced (1:1-4)

First, you have Luke himself, a learned Levite showing that he is totally convinced. If he was a Levite, he at one time worked for the temple. Verse 1 says that he has been documenting and putting together in orderly fashion what really happened. In verse 2 he claims to have interviewed eyewitnesses. That's courtroom language. In verse 3 he claims to have perfect (or more literally) accurate knowledge that he is communicating. In other words, he is promising to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. And since his writing is inspired, Theophilus will know that he has an absolute certainty in these things. Just as a side note, I want to mention that the certainty does not come from the fact that there were eyewitnesses. That would only give probability. The certainty comes from the fact that those eyewitness events have been inscripturated by prophetic inspiration. Only the Bible gives absolute certainty in life.

For any Sadducee that Theophilus is seeking to convince, having a fellow Levite narrating these events, and a very learned Levite at that, helps in establishing the testimony. Communicating it through Theophilus, a former high priest who had previously persecuted the church, adds a level of credence to this testimony as well. Theophilus would have been an incredible witness in a Jewish court.

Zacharias, a well-known priest is convinced by an angel (1:5-25)

The next witness that is being brought to the bar is Zacharias. He and his wife were both of Aaronic descent, which allowed him to minister in the Holy Place. Again, for a priest of this caliber to be brought to testify to the truth of these things is impressive. He would be a credible witness. And detailed documentation about him is introduced since he will be the father of the herald of the Messiah.

And by the way, if and when ADF uses us or another church to bring a lawsuit against the government, they are thinking strategically like Luke did. They are looking at the credibility of the church officers, and which judges to approach first, etc. When I was reading through Luke's strategies, I was seeing the ADF strategies over and over again.

And as another sidenote, I will mention again Luke's frequent mention of angels in the books of Luke and Acts. An angel speaks to Zacharias in the Holy Place. Angels play a big part in the story since Theophilus needs to get used to thinking about the realm of angels and spirits.

Mary is convinced by an angel (1:26-38)

An angel announces to Mary that she will be the instrument God will use to bring Jesus into the world. Her virginity is emphasized to make sure that the Divine Person of Jesus is not compromised by making Jesus *only* a man.

But He is indeed fully human. Just as Eve was miraculously made from Adam, Jesus will be miraculously made from Eve. He will be the start of a new humanity. But since it will be by adoption rather than generation, He is also connected to the Old Humanity through Mary. The favorite title of Jesus will be Son of Man. The Hebrew word for man is Adam - Son of Adam. Since Paul and Luke have been working with Gentiles, and since the Sadducees were very pro-Roman, grounding their Gentile ministry in Scripture has a good apologetic purpose.

The wife of a priest is convinced (1:39-45)

Then in verses 39-41 we have the wife of Zacharias the priest convinced of the reality of the coming Messiah. She prophetically acknowledges what was in the womb of Mary was her Lord - something not possible unless Jesus was indeed Divine - the same Divine Son of Man that Daniel 7 describes.

Mary's testimony (1:46-56)

In verses 46-56 we have Mary's testimony.

John the Baptizer (1:57-66)

Then the prophet John the Baptizer, also of Aaronic priesthood background, is a prime witness that Jesus is the Messiah. You can see how important all of these testimonies would be to a new convert from Sadduceanism. These witnesses are strongly connected to the temple ministry that the Sadducees oversaw.

Zacharias' prophecy (1:67-80)

Zacharias the priest then gives a beautiful prophecy about John's role in preparing the way for the Messiah.

Christ's birth historically registered by Rome (2:1-7)

And since Rome's relationship to Christ is also an important theme in Luke and Acts, you will see references to Roman centurions who believe in Luke and many Romans who believe in Acts. Indeed, half of the individual conversion stories in Acts are of Gentile government officials.⁸

In any case, since this is designed to be a legal defense of Christianity, it makes sense that Luke would use the Roman census as a witness. Mary, Joseph, and Jesus would all have been registered in the emperor's census files, and since Sadducees were in close relationship with Rome, it would be hard for them to deny this. In fact, Theophilus, as a former leader of Israel, could have legal access to those census records if he so chose.

By the way, these records must have been available for perusal by scholars who needed to be in the know. In the second century, Justyn Martyr wrote a defense of Christianity to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius stating that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, "as you can ascertain also from the registers of the taxing."⁹ He basically said, "Look them up. They are there." Also in the second century, Tertullian (160-250 AD) spoke of "the census of Augustus – that most faithful witness of the Lord's nativity, kept in the archives of Rome."¹⁰ They were still there in Tertullian's day as a witness to the truthfulness of Christianity. As late as the fourth century, John Chrysostom claimed that he saw and read the actual census/tax records in Rome and said that they contained the names of Joseph and Mary and the baby Jesus. So too did Cyril of Jerusalem in the fourth century, and he derived the true date of Christ's birth

⁸ 1) The Ethiopian eunuch, who was the treasurer of Queen Candice of Ethiopia (Acts 8:7), 2) Cornelius the Roman centurion (Acts 10:17), 3) Blastus, the king's chamberlain (Acts 12:20), 4) Sergius Paulus, a Roman provincial governor (Acts 13:7), 5) The Philippian jailer (Acts 16:27), 6) Dionysius the Aereopagite judge (Acts 17:34), 7) Publius, the governor of Malta (Acts 28:7).

⁹ Apology, I, 34.

¹⁰ Against Marcion, Book 4, 7

“from the census documents brought by Titus to Rome.”¹¹ By the way, they said Jesus was born on December 25. Just saying. That’s a side note.

But the point of Luke bringing this information up is that he is grounding every fact in history. For Sadducees, this would be a great witness.

Temple shepherds and angels (2:8-19)

The temple shepherds and angels testify in chapter 2:8-19. And by temple shepherds I mean shepherds that the temple hired to keep sheep outside Bethlehem that were being raised for temple sacrifices. They too could easily be contacted by Theophilus since he was a former leader of the temple. The Sadducees had charge over those shepherds.

Jesus circumcised as a Jew (2:21)

The circumcision of Jesus testified to the fact that He was a Jew. He isn’t bringing the kingdom worldwide because of any rejection of His Jewishness. This is a sidenote, but a very important one if Christians were hauled before a Jewish court. Luke will prove that Jesus was a faithful Jew.

Presented in the temple (2:22-24)

Likewise Jesus did not ignore temple laws. He started following temple laws to a “t” from the time that he was a baby. This was one of the criticisms that the leaders brought against Jesus - that He blasphemed against the temple. But it was a false accusation. And Luke brilliantly shows how Jesus was the true keeper of temple law and it was the Sadducees who blasphemed against the temple by using it as an international bank and robbing the citizens through their temple sales. That will be an important note later that we won’t get to.

Anyway, Christ’s presentation to the temple in verses 22-24 is just one of many examples in Luke. I won’t do this kind of detail through the whole book, but commentators have shown that *the whole book* is a legal apologetic to protect Christians in the courtroom before government officials. No wonder this was written to a government official in very formal Greek.

Simeon’s testimony (2:25-35)

Simeon’s testimony is also a verifiable and credible witness to anyone connected with the temple. Of course, it is also a rebuke to Sadducees who did not believe in any prophecy after Moses. Though Luke will emphasize prophecies from the Pentateuch, he will demonstrate over and over that the rest of the Old Testament is 100% consistent with the Pentateuch in prophesying these times.

¹¹ “Patrologia Latina,” VIII, 964, as cited by Cyril Martindale, “Christmas,” The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume III, 1908 Robert Appleton Co., Online Edition Copyright, 2003 K. Knight.

And Simeon's prophecy will prepare the reader already for Christ's death. Jesus was born to die, be buried, be raised, and to rule. Sadducees might have argued in court that if Jesus were the Messianic King, God would not have let him die. But Luke shows that the opposite is true. The way Luke craft's this whole book as an apologetic is absolutely marvelous. And I will only be able to give you a tiny glimpse into it this morning.

Anna's temple testimony (2:36-38)

Then comes Anna, another temple worker. Her testimony was heard by many in the temple. Again, there is this building of witnesses in the mind of Theophilus.

The genuineness of Christ's manhood (2:39-40)

Verses 39-40 are important witnesses to Christ's manhood - the main theme of the book. His humanity is not an illusion. His humanity is as central to Christ representing man to God as His divinity is in representing God to man.

The testimony of the Levitical scribes (2:41-50)

Then you have the testimony of the Levitical scribes in verses 41-50. They are blown away by the knowledge of the Scriptures that Jesus possessed. He was able to dialog with the best of them as a twelve year old.

These are all witnesses that Theophilus and other Sadducees would not be able to discount. He picks witness after witness associated with the temple that the Sadducees oversaw in order to demonstrate beyond any shadow of a doubt that Jesus was who He said He was.

His growth and favor with God and man (2:51-52)

And the last testimony in in this section is his growth in favor with God and man.

John the Baptist's testimony to the Son of Man (3:1-22)

In the next section he goes back to John the Baptizer. He carefully dates the event in chapter 3, verse 1, showing which Roman rulers were in power. In verse 2 he mentions that Theophilus' dad, Annas was in power. And he also connects John the Baptist with the same John that was the son of Zacharias.

This John claims to be the fulfillment of Isaiah 40 when he heralds the coming of Jesus. But he also introduces judgment themes that are about to come upon Israel unless there is repentance. This will be another sub-theme that will keep coming up throughout the book. If the leaders of Israel continue to reject Christianity and persecute Christianity, they can expect John's prophesied judgment to wipe out the nation. And Jesus gives a similar warning in chapter 21.

And John, being a priest, was fully authorized to baptize Jesus into the priesthood. John was of Aaronic lineage, but Jesus was from Judah. So this would be a different priesthood. But Theophilus cannot miss the connection that Jesus is being set apart according to the law. And the only place in the law that required this at the age of 30 was the baptism required of

all priests upon entrance into priesthood. A high priest would not miss any of these and many other details that proved that Jesus was the final priest.

Genealogy testifies to the Son of Man (3:23-38)

And then comes the genealogy of Mary. This is quite different from the genealogy in Matthew. Matthew records the genealogy of Jesus through Joseph, the adoptive father. As an adoptive father, Jesus was a son of David and could sit on the throne. But if Jesus had been an *actual* descendant of Joseph, he could not have inherited the throne since Jeremiah prophesied that no *descendant* of Jehoiakim (Jeremiah 36:30) or his son Jeconiah (Jeremiah 22:24–30) would sit on the throne of David. Well, though Joseph traces his line through Jeconiah, Jehoiakim, to Solomon, and then David, Mary traced her line from a different son of David, Nathan. Notice how verse 23 words this. The only change I will make is where to end the parenthesis: “Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being [parenthesis] (as was supposed the son of Joseph) [end of parenthesis]” and notice that that is the only occurrence of the “son of” anyone in the rest of the genealogy. The phrases “the son of... son of... son of” are in italics, which means they are not in the text. People wrongly supposed that he was the son of Joseph, but in reality he was of Heli, of Matthat, of Levi, etc. Because it is from Mary, he leaves out the son of since that implies paternal generations. So he is an actual descendant of David through Nathan, but an adoptive son of David through Solomon.

And notice that the genealogy doesn't end with David or even Abraham. It traces Christ's ancestry back through Shem, Noah, Methuselah, Mahalalel, Cainan, Enosh, Seth, Adam, and then to God. Though Jesus was a Jew, Luke will be emphasizing His humanity and his relationship to Adam. He as the Son of Man (the word Adam means man), as the Son of Adam He came to seek and to save everything that was lost in Adam. In fact, Luke 19:10 is the theme verse of the whole book “for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” What was lost? Not just the garden. Adam lost everything in this world. And Christ's atonement will flow far as the curse is found. And so the ministry of Paul and Luke is a ministry justified by the teleology of the whole Scripture.

The Son of Man passes the test (4:1-15)

Of course, the first man failed the test that Satan brought him. And in order for Jesus to be a second Adam, he had to not only fully keep God's law, but He had to pass the same tests that Satan brought to the first Adam. So the next section, chapter 4:1-13, shows this testing.

1 John says that the first Adam was tested with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. And Satan tried to tempt Jesus that way.

When His body had been fasting for forty days and was very hungry, Satan tested Jesus to deviate slightly from God's will and turn stones into bread and eat them. Jesus resisted as we should - with the Word of God.

Then Satan tempted Him with the lust of the eyes. He took Jesus up onto a high mountain and promised to give Jesus *everything He saw* (there is the lust of the eyes) if he would

simply worship Satan. Jesus again responded as we should, "Get behind Me Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only shall you serve.'"

Then Satan tempted Him with the pride of life. With everyone watching, throw Yourself off the temple top and see if God will fulfill His Word to you by making His angels catch you. Isn't that in Scripture? Wouldn't that elevate You in the sight of man?" And Jesus responded as we should. He quotes Scripture and says, "'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'"

All through this section are powerful witnesses to the fact that Jesus is indeed the victorious Divine Son of Man that Daniel 7 prophesied.

Documented and prophesied ministry of the Son of Man in Galilee (4:14-9:50)

But it is in the next section that flesh is put on the bones (so to speak) on the nature of His Person and Work. And He starts in Galilee of the Gentiles, because Luke is not simply presenting Him as a Jewish king, but as the Son of Man - the Savior of the world. All of chapter 4:14-9:50 shows Luke's meticulous documentation that the kind of ministry Jesus engages in is precisely the ministry that the Son of Man was prophesied to bring when He comes into the world.

First reactions to the Son of Man (4:14-30)

The first reactions are not positive. He declares Himself to be the Messiah in his own synagogue, and they try to kill Him. This is the demonic attitude that the nation as a whole has had against Christ right up to the time that this book was being written. But Luke writes it in such a way that it clearly seems irrational and demonic.

Demonstrations of the Son of Man's powers powers (4:31-5:28)

And indeed, the next miracle that He performs is against the demonic. Every section interlocks thematically. So Jesus casts out an unclean spirit in chapter 4:31-37. The people testify to the fact that this has not been done before. Again, testimonies that can be added to the previous ones. And if everyone in the court had to read this legal brief, it could result in the salvation of some.

Jesus then heals Peter's mother-in-law. Which, by the way, you ought to bring up to those who claim that Peter was the first Pope. Peter didn't seem to have any problems with marriage. He certainly didn't believe in the blasphemous mandate of celibacy for the priesthood. Nor did any of the other apostles. They were all married. (And by the way, I can prove that Paul had previously been married.)

Teaching about the Son of Man's kingdom (5:29-6:49)

In the next major section we have a lot of teaching about the Son of Man's kingdom. And contrary to the Sadducean idea that commoners were scum to be avoided, Jesus called the most unlikely men to be His apostles. He healed untouchable lepers. Not only did he heal

him, He touched him. In verses 27 and following we have a tax collector being called to be an apostle. Talk about the scum of the earth.

But Jesus had no problem criticizing the rulers of Israel and their false man-made traditions. Luke is not going to defend Christianity by being apologetic and covering up the civil government's crimes. If this is a legal brief, it is going on the offensive.

Anyway, Jesus said that the traditions of the rulers were as incompatible with the kingdom as a new cloth patch on an old garment or new wine in old wineskins. He starts contradicting their man-made Sabbath rules and deliberately broke those legalistic rules. So yes, Jesus is admitting to civil disobedience, but he is doing it in a way that condemns the Jewish leaders for adding to God's Word. Jesus held to very limited government for civics - that civic officers only had authority to command what the Bible explicitly allowed them to command. So Jesus is seeking to reestablish the kingdom on a true interpretation of the law. By the way, Christ never broke the Biblical Sabbath or He could not be our Savior. He had to fully keep the law to be our Savior. But He did not have to fully keep man-made civil laws to be our Savior. And the facts show that Jesus broke the civil Sabbath laws over and over again. This means that Jesus routinely engaged in civil disobedience when the statutes contradicted the constitution (which was the Bible). This informs us on the current debate of when we must submit to civil government. He submitted to true law, but didn't feel the need to submit to man-made laws that destroyed the true meaning of the Sabbath.

In this section Jesus preaches the Sermon on the plain. Where Matthew had a Sermon on the Mount, Luke has a similar sermon, but one preached at a different time and preached at a different place and had some different words and applications. Do good preachers ever re-preach old sermons? Yes. Jesus did. I probably should re-preach old sermons more often (if I want to be like Jesus).

Expansion of the Son of Man's influence (7:1-9:50)

And he repeats His ministry of healing and compassion over and over again. He heals a centurion's servant saying that this Roman had more faith than the Jews did. He raises the dead, heals the blind, and says that a prostitute who put her faith in Jesus was better off than the Pharisees were.

By the way, the number of women He healed or ministered to or who ministered to Him was quite large. Take a look at the back side of your outlines, middle of the page, #3. It says, "Women have a special place in Luke. Consider the number of times the following words occur - her (68x), she (41x), women/woman (32x), wife/wives (20x), daughter (11x), widow (9x), womb (9x), virgin (1x)." You women ought to take special encouragement from the book of Luke. It is an incredibly pro-female book. Well, the whole Bible is, but it is undeniable in Luke.

And for any Jew who was scandalized by His politically incorrect ways, He demonstrated that they were really the ones who were rejecting the light (8:16-18), were rejecting the right to be adopted into His family (vv. 19-21), were missing out on His power over demons, disease, and even nature itself. And chapter 9 makes clear that no one can be His disciple unless He takes up His cross and follows Him.

##Rejection of the Son of Man (9:51-19:27)

Increasing opposition (9:51-11:54)

But illustrating the doctrine of total depravity, the majority still rejected Jesus. And in chapter 9:51-19:27 there is increasing hostility to Jesus (which we won't have time to cover). Of course, Luke points out that none of this was unanticipated by the Old Testament or by Jesus.

Instructions in light of the rejection of the Son of Man (12:1-19:27)

But in chapters 12-19 Jesus gives detailed instructions on how to handle this coming rejection and persecution. And all the way through it the chapters are full of doctrinal information on spiritual warfare, the leaven of sin, the leaven of the kingdom, forgiveness, bitterness, joy during persecution, prayer, faith, duty, and other themes that would sustain His church - and hopefully would make prosecutors jealous of the Gospel when they were forced to read this legal brief.

Crucifixion of the Son of Man (19:28-23:56)

But from the time of His triumphal entry and cleansing of the temple on, the leaders try to trap Jesus in His Words and get him to say something that they can use to prove that He is a fake. This is powerful court evidence against the Jewish leadership. Powerful. *They* are shown to be the lawless ones.

Every single time the leaders deceitfully try to trick Jesus they are stumped and Jesus is proved to be the law-abiding sinless Son of Man. So even though there is honesty about the leadership's opposition to Jesus, the very descriptions of these clashes is more court evidence in favor of Jesus. There are more and more quotes from Scripture that the Bible anticipated this very apostasy and opposition. This is not a reason to condemn Jesus. This is a reason to believe the Scriptures and believe Jesus and for the government officials to repent. Even Christ's betrayal, suffering, and crucifixion was predicted and is proof that He is indeed who He said He was. They are all marvelous chapters that we simply don't have time to get into. But they bolster the theme and are perfectly suited to the purpose of the book and the reason it was written to Theophilus.

Proofs of the Resurrection & Commission of Kingdom (24:1-53)

But it is the last chapter that punches home the resolution. The blindness of the leaders is understandable (given the doctrine of total depravity) when you realize that even the *disciples* were blind and lacked understanding. And he gives examples of this blindness of His followers. This is an encouragement that God can forgive those who oppose Jesus in blindness (like Saul did - when he was commissioned by the high priest). Let's look at these examples.

The women were perplexed at not seeing the body of Jesus, and must be rebuked by the angels (24:5-8). When the women tell the apostles, the apostles don't believe them and treat the stories like fairy tales. Why mention that? Because many in the audience are

probably skeptical too. It is helpful to know that the apostles were skeptical. Then there is the unbelief of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Let me read you Christ's rebuke in Luke 24:25-27.

"O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

When those two later told the other apostles, the other apostles are also unbelieving until Jesus appeared to them. He ate food to prove that He had indeed a real body. So it was *skeptics* who were turned into believers who began to turn the world upside down in the book of Acts.

And in the book of Acts Luke will pick up where he left off in the Gospel. Acts will be reversing the general flow at least in terms of geography. Luke begins with the broader Roman empire and works down to Jerusalem and the cross and resurrection. Acts begins at the resurrection and ascension and works back through Jerusalem, to Judea, Samaria, throughout the Gentile world, and ends with Paul's Gospel boldly striking at the foot of Daniel's image, Rome.

When both books are read together, it is a marvelous picture of the Kingdom of the Son of Man beginning Christ's rule in the midst of His enemies. And we can take encouragement from that as well. Since it is in the midst of enemies that Christ's kingdom flourishes, we ought never to be disheartened by the presence of God's enemies. They are no match for Him. He always has been a Savior of every kind of sinner, continues to be, and will continue to be to the end of history. If He can change the heart of a Theophilus (who persecuted the church in the early chapters of Acts), he can change the hearts of political rulers in our own day. May we put our trust in the Divine Son of Man, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.