

Dr. Robert Peterson, Theology of Luke-Acts, Session 1, Johannine Theology, Overview Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

Luke Biblio, Bock-Overview and Authorship

1. Abstract of Peterson, Theology of Luke-Acts, Session 1, Luke Bibliography, Bock-Overview and Authorship, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This academic lecture by Dr. Robert A. Peterson introduces the study of Luke-Acts by focusing on authorship and providing a foundational bibliography. Peterson highlights Darrell Bock as a leading evangelical scholar on Luke, mentioning other significant commentators like Joel Green and I. Howard Marshall. The lecture emphasizes the unique nature of Luke-Acts as a two-part work exploring God's plan, the inclusion of Gentiles, and the significance of a crucified Jesus. Evidence, both internal and external, is presented to support the traditional view that Luke, a companion of Paul and likely a Gentile physician from Antioch, authored these books.

2. 21 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Peterson, Theology of Luke-Acts, Session 1 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Gospels → Luke).



**Peterson_Theo_LkA
cts_Session01.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Peterson, Theology of Luke-Acts, Session 1, Luke Bibliography, Bock-Overview and Authorship

Briefing Document: Theology of Luke-Acts - Session 1 Review

Overview: This briefing document summarizes the key themes and important information presented in the first session of Dr. Robert A. Peterson's lecture on "The Theology of Luke-Acts." The session covers introductory remarks, a brief bibliography of key Luke scholars, Darrell Bock's overview of Luke-Acts, and a discussion on the authorship of these two New Testament books.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. Introduction and Importance of Luke-Acts:

- Dr. Peterson emphasizes the significance of Luke's writings, noting that they constitute "more than half of the New Testament."
- The lecture aims to provide insight into Luke's "thinking and writing and the message that you gave through him."
- The course will explore the theology present in both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts.

2. Key Luke Scholars and Their Contributions:

- **Darrell Bock:** Described as the "premier evangelical Luke scholar" who teaches at Dallas Seminary. He is known for his orthodox and reasonable approach. Peterson highlights his two-volume commentary on Luke as "really good" for its exegetical and theological depth. Bock is also noted as a co-architect of progressive dispensationalism.
- **Joel Green:** A "very brilliant New Testament scholar in the Arminian tradition" who taught at Asbury Theological Seminary and now heads a program combining exegesis and theology at Fuller Seminary. His commentary on Luke in the New International Commentary series is praised as "outstanding," incorporating socio-rhetorical studies and offering stimulating insights. Peterson notes, "Green brings many years of experience, as does Bock, but Green's commentary is written incorporating socio-rhetorical studies, and don't always agree with him, but wow, most of the time I do, and I'm taught and really stimulated to think about Luke."

- **I. Howard Marshall:** A "distinguished British, also Methodist, New Testament scholar" known for his book *Luke, Historian, and Theologian*. This work was crucial in defending the historical reliability of Luke's writings, particularly Acts, against contemporary criticisms. Marshall is also recognized for training numerous evangelical New Testament scholars. Peterson calls his book "really solid and helpful."

3. Darrell Bock's Overview of the Gospel of Luke:

- **Uniqueness of Luke's Writings: Longest Gospel:** Luke is the longest of the four Gospels in terms of both pages in the Greek New Testament and the number of verses. (Matthew: 87 pages, 1071 verses; Mark: 60 pages, 678 verses; John: 73 pages, 869 verses; Luke: 96 pages, 1151 verses).
- **Only Gospel with a Sequel (Acts):** This linkage allows Luke to show the connection between Jesus' ministry and the early church era. "This linkage enables Luke to discuss how God brought his salvation in Jesus, how the earliest church preached Jesus, and how they carried out their mission to both Jew and Gentile."
- The two volumes (Luke and Acts) are "virtually inseparable," with the Gospel often laying the foundation for issues addressed in Acts. This raises the question of whether the New Testament canon should group Luke-Acts together.

4. Key Theological Issues Addressed by Luke-Acts:

- **Inclusion of Gentiles:** How Gentiles could become equal members of God's people alongside Jews, including issues like table fellowship and the exclusion of circumcision. Luke answers these questions largely in Acts, explaining God's direction in this process.
- **Negative Response from the Jewish Nation:** The paradox of God's plan meeting hostility from its "most natural audience," the Jewish nation, who even persecuted Christians. Luke argues that "the church did not separate itself from Israel. It continued to preach to the nation and did not withdraw. Rather, Israel turned the church out, forcing it to form a new community." The Gospel details the negative reaction of the Jewish leadership to Jesus.
- **The Role of a Crucified Jesus in God's Plan:** How Jesus, despite his absence, could continue to be present and represent God's hope. Acts emphasizes the "exaltation of Jesus" (combining resurrection and ascension) as the answer. The Gospel lays the groundwork through its Christology.

- **The Meaning of Responding to Jesus:** What is required of believers, what they can expect, and how they should live until Jesus returns. This is a "major burden of the Gospel of Luke," particularly in the "travel narrative" (Luke 9-19), which prepares disciples for Jesus' departure and their future ministry. "Accordingly, one should not separate the teaching of this Gospel too greatly from the period of the church recorded in the book of Acts." Jesus equates his mission with that of the church (Luke 24:44-49).

5. Luke's Purpose in Writing:

- Luke's primary audience was "most excellent Theophilus," to whom both the Gospel and Acts are dedicated.
- Luke's task was to "reassure Theophilus... concerning the disputed presence of Gentiles in a new community."
- The prologue in Luke 1:1-4 is "programmatic" for the Gospel, outlining Luke's methodology of careful study of traditions from "eyewitnesses and ministers of the word" to write an "orderly account" so that Theophilus could have "certainty concerning the things you have been taught."
- Luke's Gospel highlights "the role of Jesus in God's plan and promise," while Acts describes the nature of the "new community" (the church).
- Key questions addressed include whether Gentiles truly belong, if God is behind a community facing hostility, and the true significance of Jesus' life and teaching.

6. Authorship of Luke-Acts:

- Neither book explicitly names its author, but a combination of internal and external evidence points to Luke as the author of both.
- **Internal Evidence:** The author was not an eyewitness to most of Jesus' ministry, relying on the accounts of "eyewitnesses and servants of the word" (Luke 1:2).
- The author appears as a companion of Paul in the "we sections" of Acts (Acts 16:10-17, 20:5-15, 21:1-18, 27:1-28:16), shifting from third-person to first-person plural narrative. The historical reliability of these sections is debated, with some viewing them as a literary device.
- The portrayal of Paul in Acts is compared to his self-portrait in his letters, with some critics arguing for inconsistencies. However, scholars like Fitzmyer defend the connection.

- **External Evidence (Church Fathers):** By AD 200, the tradition of Luke being the author was firmly established without contrary opinion. This is significant considering the process of canon formation and the existence of many apocryphal writings.
- Early allusions to Luke's Gospel appear in 1st Clement (c. 95-96 AD) and 2nd Clement (c. 100 AD).
- Paul's use of Jesus' teaching from Luke 10:7 as "Scripture" in 1 Timothy 5:18 further supports early knowledge of the Gospel.
- Justin Martyr (c. 160 AD) identifies Luke as the author of a memoir of Jesus and a follower of Paul.
- The Muratorian Canon (c. 170-180 AD), Irenaeus (c. 175-195 AD), the Anti-Marcionite Prologue (c. 175 AD), Tertullian (early 3rd century), and Eusebius (early 4th century) all attribute Luke-Acts to Luke, often noting his connection to Paul and sometimes providing additional details (e.g., native of Antioch, physician).
- While some details in these traditions might differ (e.g., Luke's age at death), the unity regarding authorship is strong.

7. Luke's Identity as a Gentile and a Doctor:

- **Gentile Identity:** Most scholars believe Luke was a Gentile based on Colossians 4:10-11 and 14, where Luke is mentioned separately from those "of the circumcision."
- Acts 1:19 referring to "their language" (Aramaic) suggests it was not the author's native tongue.
- The Gospel's attention to Hellenistic locales and concern for Gentiles also point in this direction.
- While some argue for Luke being a Hellenistic Jewish Christian (due to his knowledge of the Old Testament), the interpretation of Colossians 4:10-11 makes this less likely.
- Fitzmyer suggests Luke might have been a "non-Jewish Semite," possibly a former God-fearer or Jewish proselyte.
- **Physician:** Colossians 4:14 refers to Luke as "the beloved physician."

- While Hobart (1882) attempted to find technical medical vocabulary in Luke-Acts, Cadbury (1926) showed that this vocabulary was common in everyday Greek. Thus, the language does not definitively prove Luke was a doctor.
- However, the consistent early church tradition identifying Luke as a doctor, coupled with Paul's description in Colossians, makes it likely. This detail served no obvious apologetic purpose, suggesting it reflects reality.

Conclusion:

Session 1 of Dr. Peterson's lectures provides a crucial foundation for understanding the theology of Luke-Acts. It highlights the importance and unique characteristics of these two books, introduces key scholarly perspectives, outlines the major theological questions Luke addresses, clarifies Luke's purpose in writing, and presents compelling evidence for Luke's authorship, likely Gentile identity, and profession as a physician. The session sets the stage for further exploration of the sources Luke utilized in his writing.

4. Study Guide: Peterson, Theology of Luke-Acts, Session 1, Luke Bibliography, Bock-Overview and Authorship

Study Guide: The Theology of Luke-Acts Session 1

Quiz

1. According to Dr. Peterson, why is Darrell Bock considered a premier evangelical Luke scholar?
2. What are the two primary ways in which the Gospel of Luke is unique compared to the other Gospels, as highlighted in the lecture?
3. What were the four particularly problematic issues in the church of Luke's time that Luke-Acts addresses?
4. According to Luke 1:1-4, what was Luke's stated purpose in writing his orderly account to Theophilus?
5. What are the two main points of internal evidence within Luke-Acts that suggest the author was not an eyewitness to most of Jesus' ministry?
6. What are the "we sections" in the Book of Acts, and why are they significant in discussions about authorship? Provide one chapter and verse reference as an example.
7. By what time period was the tradition of Luke as the author of the Gospel of Luke and Acts firmly established in the early church? What is the significance of this timeframe?
8. Give two examples of early church fathers or writings mentioned in the lecture that attribute authorship of the Gospel of Luke to Luke.
9. What is the main argument used to suggest that Luke was a Gentile, based on the letter to the Colossians?
10. While the lecture discusses the possibility of Luke being a doctor, what caution does it raise regarding the linguistic evidence presented to support this claim?

Answer Key

1. Darrell Bock is considered a premier evangelical Luke scholar because he is a voice of orthodoxy and reasonableness, does not compromise the truth, is a good

exegete and theologian, and has written two well-regarded volumes on Luke's Gospel.

2. The Gospel of Luke is unique because it is the longest Gospel in the standard Greek New Testament and because it is the only Gospel with a sequel, the Book of Acts, linking Jesus' ministry to the early church era.
3. The four problematic issues were: how Gentiles could be equally included in God's people; why the Jewish nation largely responded negatively to God's plan; how the crucified Jesus fit into God's plan; and what it means to respond to Jesus and how believers should live.
4. Luke's purpose in writing to Theophilus was to provide him with an orderly account of the things that had been accomplished among them, so that Theophilus could have certainty concerning the things he had been taught.
5. The two main points are that the author states he relied on the traditions from eyewitnesses and servants of the word (Luke 1:1-2), and the author presents himself as a companion of Paul in the "we sections" of Acts, implying he wasn't present for Jesus' ministry.
6. The "we sections" are portions of Acts where Luke shifts his narrative from the third person to the first-person plural (e.g., Acts 16:10-17), seemingly including himself as a companion of Paul in those events. These sections are debated regarding their historical reliability but limit options for authorship.
7. The tradition of Luke's authorship was firmly fixed by AD 200. This is significant because, considering the slower communication in the first century and the existence of many apocryphal writings, the early and undisputed consensus provides strong evidence for Luke's authorship.
8. Justin Martyr (around 160 AD) speaks of Luke writing a memoir of Jesus and being a follower of Paul, and Irenaeus (around 175-195 AD) attributes the Gospel to Luke, a follower of Paul, also noting the significance of the "we sections."
9. The main argument suggesting Luke was a Gentile comes from Colossians 4:10-11 and 14, where Paul distinguishes "those of the circumcision" (Jewish believers) from others among his fellow workers, including Luke, the beloved physician.
10. While Hobart gathered linguistic evidence suggesting Luke was a doctor, Cadbury's work showed that the alleged technical medical vocabulary was common in everyday Greek documents, including the Septuagint and other

contemporary writings, meaning such language did not definitively prove Luke's profession.

Essay Format Questions

1. Discuss the significance of Luke writing both a Gospel and the Book of Acts. How does this two-volume work contribute to our understanding of God's plan of salvation, particularly concerning the inclusion of Gentiles?
2. Analyze the internal and external evidence presented in the lecture regarding the authorship of Luke-Acts. Which type of evidence do you find more persuasive, and why?
3. Explain the four major issues facing the early church in Luke's time that are addressed in Luke-Acts. How does Luke's narrative attempt to provide reassurance and clarity regarding these issues?
4. Describe the scholarly debate surrounding the "we sections" in the Book of Acts. What are the different perspectives on their nature and implications for understanding the author's relationship with Paul?
5. Evaluate the arguments for and against Luke being a Gentile and a medical doctor. What conclusions can be drawn based on the evidence discussed in the lecture, and what are the limitations of this evidence?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Exegesis:** The critical interpretation and explanation of a text, especially of scripture.
- **Evangelical:** Relating to or denoting a major movement within Protestantism that emphasizes the experience of conversion, the authority of Scripture, and the importance of preaching in spreading the Gospel.
- **Dispensationalism:** A theological system that understands God's plan as unfolding in distinct administrative periods or "dispensations."
- **Covenant Theology:** A theological system that understands God's relationship with humanity through a series of covenants.
- **Socio-rhetorical studies:** An approach to biblical interpretation that considers the social and rhetorical context of the text.

- **Exaltation (of Jesus):** The belief that after his resurrection, Jesus was raised to glory and honor at the right hand of God.
- **Ascension (of Jesus):** The event recorded in Luke 24 and Acts 1 where Jesus was taken up into heaven.
- **Travel Narrative (Jerusalem Journey):** The section in Luke's Gospel (roughly chapters 9-19) where Jesus is depicted as intentionally traveling towards Jerusalem, using this journey to teach his disciples.
- **Theophilus:** The individual to whom both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts are addressed.
- **Internal Evidence:** Information or clues found within the text itself that can provide insights into its authorship, purpose, and audience.
- **External Evidence:** Information or testimony from sources outside the text itself, such as early church writings, historical records, and other ancient documents.
- **"We Sections":** Passages in the Book of Acts where the author shifts from third-person narration to first-person plural ("we"), suggesting the author was present during those events.
- **Church Fathers:** Influential theologians and writers of the early Christian church whose teachings and writings helped shape Christian doctrine.
- **Canon (of Scripture):** The collection of books that are recognized as authoritative and divinely inspired Scripture.
- **Apocryphal Gospels/Acts/Letters/Apocalypses:** Books with similar content and style to canonical biblical books but not recognized as part of the inspired Scripture by the mainstream church.
- **Septuagint:** The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible.
- **Hellenistic Jewish Christian:** A Jewish person who had adopted Greek language and culture and had become a Christian.
- **God-fearer:** A Gentile who was sympathetic to Judaism, observed some Jewish practices, but did not fully convert (e.g., by undergoing circumcision).
- **Proselyte:** A Gentile who had fully converted to Judaism.

5. FAQs on Peterson, Theology of Luke-Acts, Session 1, Luke Bibliography, Bock-Overview and Authorship, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions about the Theology and Authorship of Luke-Acts

1. Why is the study of Luke's theology considered significant within the New Testament?

Luke's two-volume work, the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, comprises more than half of the New Testament. This sheer volume indicates the significance the early church placed on Luke's account. Furthermore, Luke uniquely connects the ministry of Jesus with the subsequent growth and mission of the early church, providing a comprehensive understanding of God's saving work through Jesus and its continuation. Understanding Luke's theological perspectives is crucial for grasping the unfolding of God's plan for both Jews and Gentiles.

2. What are the primary questions or problems that Luke-Acts seeks to address?

Luke-Acts addresses several critical questions facing the early church. These include how Gentiles could be included in God's people on equal footing with Jews, why the Jewish nation largely rejected the message of Jesus despite its roots in their tradition, how the crucified and absent Jesus could still be the center of God's plan and the hope of believers, and what it means to respond to Jesus and live as his followers in the interim period before his return. Luke's narrative aims to provide reassurance and clarity on these foundational issues.

3. How does Luke structure his two-volume work (Gospel and Acts) to convey his theological message?

Luke intentionally structures his work to show the continuity of God's plan. The Gospel of Luke introduces Jesus, his ministry, and his teachings, laying the groundwork for the events that unfold in Acts. Acts then demonstrates how Jesus' mission and the promises of God are carried forward through the Holy Spirit and the early church, extending salvation to both Jews and Gentiles. The two volumes are virtually inseparable, with the Gospel often raising issues that are further developed and answered in Acts.

4. What is the significance of Luke's dedication to "Theophilus"?

Luke explicitly dedicates both his Gospel and the Book of Acts to "Theophilus," indicating a specific intended audience. While the exact identity of Theophilus is debated (whether a potential convert or an existing believer), the dedication suggests that Luke's purpose in writing was to provide Theophilus with a reliable and orderly account of the events surrounding Jesus and the early church, so that he could have certainty regarding the teachings he had received about God's plan and the role of disciples.

5. What evidence suggests that Luke, the companion of Paul, is the author of both the Gospel and Acts?

The authorship of Luke-Acts is supported by both internal and external evidence. Internally, the author of Acts includes himself in the narrative during certain "we sections," indicating he was a companion of Paul during some of his travels. The prologue to Luke's Gospel also suggests the author was not an eyewitness to Jesus' ministry but relied on the accounts of others. External evidence from early church fathers, dating back to the late first and second centuries, consistently attributes both works to Luke, a physician and companion of Paul. This early and widespread consensus, without any significant dissenting voices, strongly supports Lukan authorship.

6. Was Luke likely a Jew or a Gentile? What implications does this have for his writing?

While some scholars propose Luke was a Hellenistic Jewish Christian or a non-Jewish Semite, the majority view is that Luke was a Gentile. This conclusion is primarily based on Colossians 4:10-11 and 14, where Paul distinguishes between his Jewish and non-Jewish coworkers, listing Luke among the latter. Luke's Gentile background could explain his particular interest in the inclusion of Gentiles in God's plan and his emphasis on the universality of salvation offered through Jesus.

7. How does Luke portray the relationship between Judaism and the emerging Christian community?

Luke portrays the early Christian community as having historical roots in Jewish promises and initially proclaiming their message to the Jewish people. However, he also highlights the increasing rejection of Jesus and his followers by the Jewish leadership and a significant portion of the nation. According to Luke, the separation between Judaism and the emerging church was not initiated by the Christians, who continued to offer the message of hope to the Jews. Instead, it was the resistance and hostility from the Jewish community that ultimately led to the formation of a distinct, inclusive community open to Gentiles.

8. What is the central theme or message that unifies the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts?

The overarching theme that unites Luke-Acts is the unfolding of God's comprehensive plan of salvation through Jesus Christ, extending from his earthly ministry to the establishment and expansion of the early church, encompassing both Jews and Gentiles. Luke emphasizes God's faithfulness to his promises, the identity of Jesus as the promised Messiah and Lord of all, the crucial role of the Holy Spirit in empowering the church's mission, and the requirements and expectations for those who respond to Jesus' call to discipleship in a world that may be hostile to this message.