

Luke: Jewish Writer to the Jewish Nation

The Scofield Bible in its introduction to the Book of Luke says, "He (Luke) was of Jewish ancestry, but his correct Greek marks him as a Jew of the dispersion."

There is much evidence to support this statement, but very little evidence to support the theory that Luke was a Gentile.

Romans 3:1,2 states, "What advantage then bath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." The Jews' chief advantage and privilege, then, was that the Word of God came through them. The phrase "oracles of God" does not mean just the Old Testament, because Peter speaks of the New Testament writings also as oracles of God. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God..." (I Peter 4:11)

Even those New Testament books written to Gentiles were written by a man who was thoroughly a Jew, the apostle Paul. He was "taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers" (Acts 22:3) and his knowledge of the scriptures is seen in his many references to the Old Testament. Also Hebrews was written by one who had this background (evidently Paul).

Since the book of Hebrews and the epistles of James, Peter, and John are addressed to Jewish believers and especially concerned with God's promises and prophecies to them, is it not reasonable that the writers of these books were Jews? In the same light, if the book of Luke and the Acts are primarily concerned with God's dealings with Israel, isn't it logical to again assume that the writer was Jewish?

Many have assumed that Luke was a Gentile, but there is no real evidence to support this. They say he has a Gentile name - so does Mark. Some have reasoned from Colossians 4:10-11 that since Luke was not mentioned with those "of the circumcision", but was spoken about three verses later, that he was not to be included as one of the circumcision (Israel). However, nothing is said there to indicate that he was not also of that nation.

It has also been stated by some that the Book of Luke was written from a Gentile viewpoint. But if we understand that he was writing

concerning the prophecies and promises to the nation Israel, then we would realize that this book is primarily from a Jewish viewpoint. All four of the gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John - are concerned with the gospel of the kingdom. Luke certainly presents Christ's kingship, deity, and ministry to Israel as thoroughly as do the others.

Following are several passages from Luke's Gospel that indicate that he was Jewish and thus had a thorough and accurate background in the Old Testament scriptures.

In Luke 1:1-4, he refers to "...those things which are surely believed among us." If this book primarily concerns God's message to Israel, the us must refer to Jews. Verse two says, "Even as they (the apostles), delivered them unto us..." The twelve apostles did not deliver these things to Gentiles, but to the children of Israel. (See 1:16)

In Luke 1:5-8 we have the account of the priest Zacharias, of the course (family) of Abia (Abijah). Verse eight states that "...he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course." Note that in I Chronicles 24:1-19 David had divided the priests into twenty-four orders (or courses). "...the orderings of them in their service to come into the house of the Lord." (verse 19) Zacharias was of the eighth order, Abijah (verse 10). Just this one short account shows Luke's knowledge of Israel's priesthood, genealogy, and priestly duties which were definitely foreign to Gentiles.

The following verses show the "perfect understanding" (Luke 1:3) that

Luke had of Israel's prophecies and their fulfillment:

Luke 1:16: And many of the children of Israel shall he (John the Baptist) turn to the Lord their God.

Luke 1:17: And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias (Elijah). (See Malachi 4:5)

Luke 1:32-33: "...the Lord shall give unto Him the throne of His father David (Isaiah 9:7): and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever..."

Luke 1:54-55: He has Yelped his servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed forever.

Luke 1:68-70: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel: for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world

began:

Luke 1:77-78: To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us.

Luke 2:21-24 gives ceremonial laws observed - purification, circumcision, dedication at the temple, sacrifice made.

Luke 3:3 speaks of "...baptism of repentance for the remission sins.

Luke 3:23-28 gives the genealogy of the Lord Jesus.

Luke 4:17-19 is about Jesus preaching according to Isaiah's prophecy.

Luke 5:12-15 relates the story of a leper cleansed, sent to the priest to make an offering and be pronounced clean according to Moses' law. (Lev. 14:4)

Luke 11:1-4 gives the Kingdom prayer.

Luke 12:32-34 tells of the Kingdom to be given to the little flock - the believing remnant.

Luke 21, called the Olivet discourse, prophecies of the tribulation and is very similar to Matthew 24 and Mark 13.

Luke 22:28-30 states the twelve apostles' position in the kingdom.

In the Book of Acts, we have a continuation of God's dealings with Israel. The twelve apostles preach the gospel of the Kingdom to Israel. They teach and practice all that the Lord Jesus instructed them to do. We see from Acts 21:20 that the believers of Israel were still observing the law of Moses at a late date. We do not see God beginning to turn from Israel until Paul's ministry begins (see Acts 13:46). The

bookk records Gentile salvation through Paul's ministry, but it also records that Paul went to the Jewish synagogues whenever possible, preaching Christ. Also we find him dealing with Jewish leaders to the very last passages of Acts 28.

Luke's Book of Acts was not written from a Gentile viewpoint, but rather from a Jewish viewpoint. Here is where much confusion in Protestantism is found. Instead of realizing that the doctrinal teachings for the Body of Christ are to be found only in Paul's epistles, they are still teaching and practicing the things that belong to the Acts period. If we are to rightly divide the Word (II Timothy 2:15), we must see the difference between the gospel of the Kingdom, with its ordinances, miracles, and signs, and the gospel of the grace of God which Paul also called "my gospel" (II Timothy 2:8). In this gospel salvation is by grace through faith in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Cor. 15:1-4) Signs, miracles, and law observances are not. for us today.

In summary, we may conclude concerning Luke's nationality that since he was writing from the Jewish viewpoint, recording Israel's history, prophecies, and God's dealings with them in his lifetime, then he must have been of Jewish ancestry. God chose him for this great responsibility just as he chose the other writers of Scripture who were also of Israel and had a knowledge of the revelations that God made to that nation. Psalm 147:19 states, "He sheweth His Word unto Jacob, His statues and His judgments to Israel. He bath not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments they have not known them."