HUMA 1850 The Bible and Modern Contexts

**Feb. 25: A Third Jesus? (Tony B)**  
Read for today: IB Ch. 13 Negotiating the Empire in Luke-Acts (pp. 307-325). Be sure to read the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles.

1. What is the Gospel of Luke?

* Luke is the author of a two-part story: Luke and Acts (note the two parallel introductions in Luke 1:1-5 and Acts 1:1-2)
* how were “histories” written in antiquity?
* Lucian (ca. 120-190 CE): “[the historian’s role is] to give a fine arrangement to events and illuminate them as vividly as possible.”
* Cicero (106-43 BCE) on speeches: “With references to the speeches in this history…it was in all cases difficult to carry them word for word in one’s memory, so my habit has been to make the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by the various occasions, of course, adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said.”

2. Who is “Luke?”

A. Tradition

* “…and Luke also who was a follower of Paul put down in a book the gospel that was preached by him (i.e., Paul)” (Irenaeus as reported by Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* 5.8.3)
* from a *Prologue to Luke* written at end of 2nd c. (?): “Luke is a Syrian of Antioch, a Syrian by race, a physician by profession. He had become a disciple of the apostles and later followed Paul until his (Paul’s) martyrdom, having served the Lord continuously, unmarried, without children, filled with the Holy Spirit he died at the age of eighty-four years in Boeotia”
* BUT: no evidence for the title of “Luke” attached to this text before Irenaeus’ time (ca. 180)
* why “Luke”? the “we” section of Acts (see Acts 16:10 and much of chs. 16, 20, 21, 27 and 28) suggests that the author was a companion of Paul and a certain Luke is mentioned in Paul’s letters (Philemon 1:24, Colossians 4:14, 2 Timothy 4:11)

B. Analysis

* the author’s theological outlook is distinctly different from that of Paul (e.g., dietary rules), and his description of Paul’s career differs significantly from what Paul says in his own letters
* what does Luke’s introduction tell us about the author and his readers?

3. When was Luke Written?

4. Where was Luke Written?

* summary: Luke written by (perhaps) an anonymous, well-educated, Gentile Christian ca. 80-85 CE with information gathered from a variety of sources for other Christians to inform or correct about Jesus

5. How was Luke Written?

A. View of history:

* three-period scheme of salvation history: the law and the prophets which ends with John Baptist, the “middle time” of Jesus on earth where Satan was absent and salvation was fully present, the third is the time of the church as told in Acts in which Luke and his readers lived
* the Holy Spirit is the real hero of Luke’s larger narrative

B. Changes made in anticipation of Acts:

* What Defiles a Person (Mark 7:1-23 par), the Resurrection (Mark 16:1-8 par)

6. Why Was Luke Written?

A. Delay of the Parousia (second coming)

* kingdom of God as present reality (Luke 17:20-21)
* daily sacrifice, not martyrdom (Luke 9:23-27)

B. Improve portrayal of Jesus

* Jesus more in control, more composed (e.g., Luke 23: 44-46)

C. Improve portrayal of the apostles

* they are the heroes in Acts so Luke must elevate them above Mark’s depiction

(e.g., Luke 22:45-46)

D. Christology

* Jesus as “Savior of the World”
* compare this dedication to the emperor Augustus (r. 23 BCE-14 CE): Whereas Providence…has…adorned our lives with the highest good: Augustus…and has in her beneficence granted us and those who will come after us [a Savior] who has made war to cease and who shall put everything [in peaceful] order…with the result that the birthday of our God signaled the beginning of the Good News for the world because of him…therefore…the Greeks in Asia decreed that the New Year begin for all the cities on September 23…and the first month shall…be observed as the Month of Caesar., beginning with 23 September, the birthday of Caesar.” ~ Decree of calendrical change on marble stele in the Asian temples dedicated to the Roman Empire and Augustus, its first emperor

E. Interest in Outcasts

* Parable of the Great Supper (Luke 14:16-24)
* Luke’s Sermon on the Plain emphasizes the lives of the lowly
* Parable of the Rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37), Parable of the Unjust manager (Luke 16:1-13)

PART TWO: Acts of the Apostles

1. Motives Behind Luke’s Portrayal of the Early Church

* Luke presents the church as an orderly progressing institution moving out into the world, as well as away from Judaism
* the journey motif; if Acts was written ca. 80-85, why is Paul’s death not reported?
* hints in Acts that the growth of the church was not quite so “orderly”
* Luke/Acts as a mediating text—i.e., it brings disparate Christian groups together in one myth of origins

## 2. Christianity Comes to the Gentiles

* Acts presents the movement of Christianity from Jews to Gentiles as a gradual process with multiple stages

## A. The activities of the Jerusalem Church (Acts 1-5)

* Jerusalem church appears thoroughly Jewish: they daily attend the temple at the hours of prayer, and come together there for mutual support and to teach and evangelize
* also have unique (perhaps apocalyptic) social structure (Acts 4:32-37)
* two leaders: Peter and James
  + the James ossuary

B. Hebrews vs. Hellenists (Acts 6-7)

* two groups of Christians now in Jerusalem: Hellenists (Jews who had adopted Greek ways, probably originally from the Diaspora but returned to the land) and the Hebrews (James’ and Peter’s group)
* Stephen’s death (6:8-60) leads to persecution and dispersion of the Hellenists
* Philip (a Hellenist, not an apostle) preaches in Samaria and to an Ethiopian eunuch in Gaza: the message goes to marginal Jews

C. The Conversion of Paul (9:1-30)

* Paul was the enemy not of Christians but of Hellenist Christians
* after his “conversion,” Paul comes to Jerusalem; the disciples fear him (understandable) but Barnabas stands up for him and apparently gains their support; but the Hellenists, those whom he once persecuted, try to kill him
* who is Paul preaching to at this point in the story?

D. Peter and Cornelius (10:1-11:18)

* Cornelius, a centurion living in Caesarea, and “a devout man who feared God” (10:2)
* Peter’s vision: an array of food, including food that is forbidden to Jews, but a voice tells him that he may eat it
* the Jerusalem Christians declare: “Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life” (11:18)
* God-fearers now granted membership in the community and Jewish-Christians allowed to eat with them

E. The Mission to the Gentiles (Acts 11:19-14:28)

* Hellenist Jewish-Christians preach to Gentiles in Antioch (11:9-25); Jerusalem sends Barnabas to investigate; sends for Paul to join him
* 13:13-14:28 Paul and Barnabas journey to Antioch of Pisidia and Iconium
* individuals from Judea come to Antioch saying circumcision necessary for salvation (15:1); Paul and Barnabas journey to Jerusalem to ask for advice (the Jerusalem Council)
* James agrees to Paul’s mission but stipulates certain requirements: the Noachian precepts (Gen 9:1-7)

##### 3. The Journeys of Paul

* Acts 16 to 28:15 focuses on Paul’s preaching mission; he goes from place-to-place and goes into his typical routine of preaching in the synagogue, resistance from Jews when Gentiles are interested, rejection of Jews, persecution (trials, etc.)
* journey eventually leads to Rome
* Paul leaves them and us with a final message against the Jews (Acts 28:25-28)