

# LUKE-ACTS

*with* Derek Morphey

## Introducing the author

Derek Morphey is the founding pastor of the Vineyard Christian Fellowship in Kenilworth, Cape Town, South Africa. He has been a pastor since 1973 and has often been involved in church planting. Derek serves on the national leadership team of the Association of Vineyard Churches in South Africa and is the international director of Vineyard Bible Institute, having obtained a BA in Theology from Rhodes University and a Ph.D. in the field of New Testament Studies from the University of Cape Town. He has written two published works, *South Africa; the Powers Behind*<sup>1</sup> and *Breakthrough; Discovering the Kingdom*,<sup>2</sup> one E Publication, *The Spiritual Spider Web, a Study of Ancient and Contemporary Gnosticism*,<sup>3</sup> and various in house publications for Vineyard Bible Institute.<sup>4</sup>

## Introducing the course

Luke-Acts gives us the biggest picture the New Testament provides on the whole story of Jesus. It is therefore of vital significance. It draws us, in particular, into the discipline of biblical theology.

There are a number of VBI courses Luke-Acts intersects with in terms of content (see under order of study below).

∞ This course, since it is written by Derek Morphey, assumes *Breakthrough: Understanding the Kingdom*, or the VBI equivalent texts in *Kingdom I* and

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<sup>1</sup> Originally published by Struik Christian Books, it is now available as an E-Publication from Vineyard International Publishing, [www.Vineyardbi.org/vip](http://www.Vineyardbi.org/vip)

<sup>2</sup> Vineyard International Publishing, Cape Town, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> [www.Vineyardbi.org/vip](http://www.Vineyardbi.org/vip)

<sup>4</sup> Christology I, Hebrews I & II, Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, Romans II, The Church and Its Leaders, 1 John.

*Kingdom II*. It also has much in common with *Christology I* and *The Church and Its Leaders*.

- ∞ Then the nature of Luke-Acts a narrative follows on from the themes expounded in *Biblical Overview II*. It also, since Luke is one of the Gospels, has much in common with *Introduction to the Gospels*.

In terms of the order of VBI courses, students should only do this course after having completed *Introduction to the Gospels*.

Here is an important word to students. We live in a rushed world, where we tend to cram too much into too little time. One of the things to suffer as a result is biblical literacy. People do not read the scriptures as much as previous, “slower” generations. VBI students, especially those engaged in the degree level, may be hard pressed to fulfil the reading requirements in time. A high value for VBI is to ensure that students engage with the actual text of scripture, and not just with their course material. All this is to explain that this course has fairly long tables with a significant amount of biblical text. This is deliberate. If for instance, when describing the focus Luke has on prayer, we simply listed the text references to prayer, and the conclusions to be drawn from them, very few students would take the time to look up each reference and read what Luke actually says. The way this course is designed, by the time you have completed it you will be well acquainted with what Luke wrote, as well as the authors “take” on Luke. Please do not rush over the text tables. They are important!

## Abbreviations

Bib	Biblica
BJRL	Bulletin of the John Rylands Library
BS	Bibliotheca Sacra
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CQR	Church Quarterly Review
ET	Expository Times
Int	Interpretation
JAAR	Journal of American Academic Religion
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JQR	Jewish Quarterly Review
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
NTS	New Testament Studies
NIDNTT	New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
ZNTW	Zeitschrift für Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
SLA	Studies in Luke Acts, edited Keck & Martyn
ST	Studia Theologica
SE	Studia Evangelica

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## Introduction

The normal procedure, for biblical books, is to deal with subjects like: who the author is, the date of writing, the intended audience and the historical context first, before an analysis or commentary on the text itself. This volume will invert the traditional approach. We will first examine the contents and theology of Luke and then, having done so, deal with the critical issues.

I will therefore operate with certain assumptions on these issues which will be defended in more detail later. Here are the assumptions.

1. The author of both volumes, Luke and Acts, was the companion of Paul, Luke the physician, whose appearance in the narrative of Acts is signified by the “we” sections (where the author changes from “they” language to “we” language).
2. Luke wrote Acts somewhere near the time of Paul’s trial in Rome, namely AD 62. This is the most likely date for Acts. Luke must have been written some time before Acts.

The approach to Luke-Acts, also to be defended later, takes place within the context of recent scholarship. Broadly speaking, there have been three era’s in Lucan studies.<sup>5</sup>

1. The period when the popular approach to the Gospels was *source criticism* viewed Luke primarily as an *historian*.
2. The period when the popular approach to the Gospels was *redaction* (or editorial) *criticism* (1950 onwards) viewed Luke primarily as a *theologian*.<sup>6</sup>
3. The most recent approach (1990’s onwards) has been to view Luke in terms of *narrative*.<sup>7</sup> This approach is not overly concerned with issues of sources, historicity or authorship, but looks at the text itself and analysis its shape and content.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Howard Marshall lays out the same three categories in *The Acts of the Apostles, New Testament Guides*, Sheffield Academic Press, 1997, p 14-15.

<sup>6</sup> Charles H. Talbert traces the shift in focus to the work of Dibelius and Bultmann, “Luke-Acts,” in *The New Testament and Its Modern Interpreters*, edited by Eldon Jay Epp and George W. MacRae, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989, p 297-298.

<sup>7</sup> For a recent “take” on narrative in Luke-Acts, see John M. Court, *Reading the New Testament*, London: Routledge, 1997, p 35-38. He sees the journey as the central motif.

<sup>8</sup> For a helpful summary of these eras in Lukan studies see D.A. Carson & Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992, (hereafter referred to as Carson/Moo), p 216-219. Howard Marshall also gives a helpful summary of the first two eras in *Luke, Historian and Theologian*, Exeter: Paternoster, 1970, (hereafter referred to as *Luke Historian*), p 13-20.

The method adopted here is a systems approach,<sup>9</sup> namely one that uses all the various tools available to get to the text. It will follow Marshall who argues cogently that one cannot choose between Luke the historian and Luke the theologian, because he is simultaneously historian and theologian.<sup>10</sup> This assumption is based in turn upon an approach to the historical method which rejects the somewhat naive 19<sup>th</sup> century view of history and is more in touch with recent methods of writing history (historiography), which in turn is based on an approach to knowledge in general (epistemology) known as critical realism.<sup>11</sup>

To return to Luke, those who engaged in *source criticism* found their ideal object of study in Luke-Acts, since Luke is the only New Testament writer who openly tells us that he used sources (Luke 1.1-4). Most scholars are fairly confident that Luke used Mark. Somewhat more speculative is the idea that he shared a common source with Matthew, now lost, usually called Q (the German *Quelle* means source), a document, or perhaps a tradition, that concentrated more on the teaching of Jesus. Then Luke has special sources all of his own, behind his infancy narrative, in his journey narrative, behind some of the special elements in his passion narrative, and in the resurrection stories. Then perhaps he had a particular source for the first part of Acts, after which he turns up in the story himself. The questions scholars ask about such sources indicate a real interest in *historicity*. Which of these sources are older, which are later? How reliable are the sources? How does Luke use them? In such a context a writer who uses the technical language of first century historians should be carefully assessed.

Behind all such questions is the thought that we can get back, via Luke the historian, to what actually happened, crucially, to Jesus and his message, mission and life. Clearly Luke wants us to believe that this is a sound expectation, because he writes to Theophilus so that he can know “the certainly” about the events that took place (1:4). We will return to these issues.

Those who engage in *redaction criticism* normally (but not always) do so from the assumption that Luke cannot be trusted as an historian. This in turn is part of a wider story about the first and second quests for the historical Jesus, both of which have gone down in history as having failed. Nevertheless, a whole set of assumptions developed based on the idea that we can never get anywhere near the historical Jesus. All we have is the rather creative witness of the early church, now mediated to us through the equally creative role of New Testament writers, who are primarily theologians, not historians. They do not primarily gather

<sup>9</sup> The approach adopted in my dissertation (hereafter referred to as *Thesis*), Derek Morpew, *A Critical Investigation of the Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke*, University of Cape Town, 1984.

<sup>10</sup> Hence the title of his primary work, *Luke: Historian and Theologian*.

<sup>11</sup> Discussed in detail in *Thesis*, chapter 3, “The Historical-Critical Method.”

source documents and piece them together. They are theologians in their own right. We should therefore investigate how they edited the tradition they received, how they “spun” the story for their own audience, time and priorities. We can therefore talk about the evolution of *theology*, not about history.<sup>12</sup>

Here again a host of assumptions were involved: a dualist (Kantian) dichotomy between history and theology and the role of existentialist philosophy, leading to the theory that Luke has “historicized” the original message of the kingdom. We will return to these issues.

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<sup>12</sup> Some of the primary scholars in this approach were Ernst Kasemann, Philipp Vielhauer, Hans Conzelmann and Ernst Haenchen. See references in the bibliography.