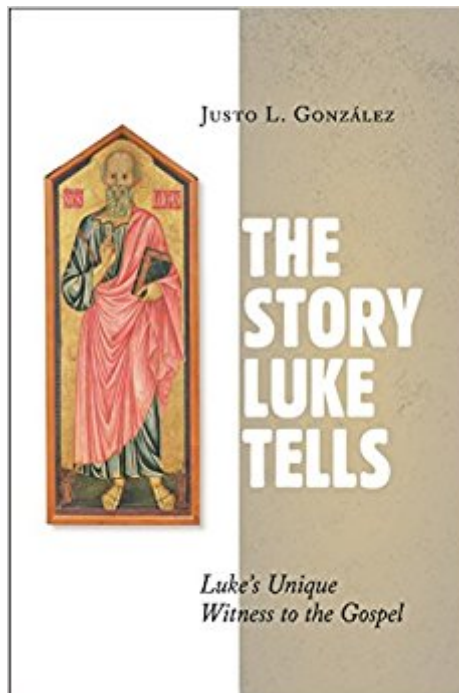




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# The Story Luke Tells: Luke's Unique Witness To The Gospel



## Synopsis

Among New Testament writers, who is the best historian? Without a doubt, says Justo Gonzalez, it's Luke. Concerned about the particulars of people and events, Luke also gives readers the big picture, positioning the stories of Jesus not just in the history of Israel but in the history of humankind. Luke uniquely tells us the grand story of salvation -- then and now. Gonzalez skillfully highlights key themes in Luke's storytelling, including his strong emphasis on God's "great reversals," his keen interest in shared meals and their intimate connection to worship and communion, and his passionate underscoring of both the saving work of Christ and the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. Writing in a conversational style, Gonzalez draws readers into Luke's story with fresh overviews and rich details, showing how Luke invites us to continue his gospel witness today. Watch a 2014 interview with the author of this book here:

## Book Information

Paperback: 141 pages

Publisher: Eerdmans (February 14, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 080287200X

ISBN-13: 978-0802872005

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.4 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 6.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 9 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #181,473 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #226 in Books > Christian Books > Bible Study & Reference > New Testament > Jesus, the Gospels & Acts #621 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Bible Study & Reference > Bible Study > New Testament #36847 in Books > Religion & Spirituality

## Customer Reviews

M. Craig Barnes • author of *The Pastor as Minor Poet* "It is wonderful to have one of our greatest current historians of Christianity writing about the church's first historian. Justo Gonzalez introduces us to the heart and mind of Luke as a theological storyteller, revealing Luke's genius in writing a new history." John M. Buchanan • editor and publisher of *The Christian Century* "People and preachers love Luke's powerful narrative, unforgettable parables, compelling personalities. Gonzalez's fresh, new resource brings to

the familiar words a scholar's insight and a historian's perspective. . . . A highly readable and accessible book that will engage the mind and feed the spirit."Martin B. Copenhaver • coauthor of *This Odd and Wondrous Calling* "In this book Justo González invites us to explore Luke's Gospel and the book of Acts as twin volumes of the same masterwork. Like any experienced guide, González helps us see what we would otherwise miss: in his company, the journey into Luke's writings becomes even more engaging and enriching. Never again will I read Luke without drawing on González's insights, which now seem indispensable."Paul Borgman • author of *The Way according to Luke* "A crisply written primer on major themes and cultural contexts in Luke-Acts. González nicely presents the scope of Luke's work as a continuation of the story told in the Hebrew scriptures. *The Story Luke Tells* will entice readers to dig deeper and to think more broadly about Luke's vision of God's intended salvation through Israel's Messiah, Jesus."Crux Sola "A very enjoyable read. González is a winsome and gifted communicator, and he holds his own in the Biblical Studies arena. If you want to dip into Luke's theology and his message for the church today, this is a pretty good place to start."Methodist Recorder "Very readable and quite short, but there is more to it than first impressions suggest. This is a book which could be a useful resource for ministers, local preachers, and house groups who want to engage with the Gospel for the next liturgical year."National Catholic Reporter "Offers some key insights into the church's first historian. This solid introductory text will appeal to a broad readership."Theology Today "Offers an engaging walk-through of important themes in Luke-Acts. . . . The fruit of a wise theologian's thoughtful, lifelong engagement with Luke's story."Presbyterian Outlook "Justo González is an exemplary historian. Untold numbers of seminary students, now pastors, have been influenced by his long and distinguished work. Now he turns his considerable skills to explore the theology that undergirds the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. . . . This is not only church history, it's also a theological commentary. . . . Teachers and preachers should add this one to your Luke shelf and refer to it often."Word & World "This book serves as an ideal synthesis of exegesis and theology, especially for the pastor and preacher. . . . A rich reading of Luke that can enliven not just the preaching of the good news but its daily living as well."

Justo L. González is a retired United Methodist minister and professor of historical theology. His more than one hundred books, which have been published in ten languages, include the acclaimed three-volume *History of Christian Thought* and *The Story of Christianity*.

Very well written with well great scholastic and theological work. I will read this multiple times and use it for reference. This enhanced my view of this gospel writer tremendously and gave me a depth to grow my faith.

Excellent perspective on Luke's understanding of Christ turning the tables, upside down ministry. Pleasant read as well.

As needed for class

Excellent

Unbelievably good, love this book!

González is an eloquent communicator, making this book a great read, and as a historian he puts the author (understood to be Luke) in the context of what was taking place in his cultural setting. He sets Luke's message alongside the accounts of the other gospels and points out the nuances that are unique to Luke and Acts. There were a number of discussions I found to be most enlightening, not that this short study is necessarily unexplored territory, but it was a great read for someone who may not be trained in fields of biblical scholastic studies, providing a view of the story from a fresh perspective and written in non-technical language, thereby making this work accessible to anyone while keeping it engaging for a trained academic. He starts off pointing out how undervalued Luke (Luke and Acts), as a NT contributor has been. Luke's writing forms a substantial part of the NT, therefore González systematically explores Luke's different outlooks on many subjects: salvation, the history of humanity and also more specifically Israel's history, gender roles, examining theological and social implications relating to food and drink, worship, the role of the Holy Spirit and the list goes on. He also made some passing comments throughout the book I found to be extremely valuable. Not just in relation to the accounts of Luke, but also practices and principles that inevitably shape the rest of our worldview pertaining to biblical study and exegesis. While I don't wholly adhere to everything promoted in this book, it is nevertheless a worthwhile read that will give more appreciation for the story Luke tells, and thus give more of an appreciation for the one of whom the story speaks. After all, it's our story too. True to pastoral form, González begins and concludes with practical admonitions.

With *The Story Luke Tells*, Justo González has written just the kind of book a lot of us need to read, study, and learn from. González is now retired, but his background is in historical theology, and he has taught at a number of seminaries and written a number of books. Like his early and very popular two-volume textbook *The Story of Christianity*, *The Story Luke Tells* was written as an introduction to a topic, not as a final or in-depth study. This book has no footnotes or bibliography or any other scholarly trappings. But it is engaging from beginning to end. The introduction makes a number of points and observations about Luke and his work that most of us either didn't know, or never really thought about. For one thing, having written the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, Luke has contributed more to the New Testament than any other writer, and yes, that includes Paul, because we know Paul was not the author of a number of the works attributed to him. (Anyone who can't accept this fact probably wouldn't read past this point of the book, I'm guessing.) Not only that, much of what is found in Luke's gospel isn't in any of the other gospels, and of course with minor exceptions relating to Paul, what is in Acts can't be found anywhere else. On top of that, some of Jesus' best parables and teachings come from Luke only. The introduction also makes plain something that would be easy to miss unless you have read a bit more in-depth in church history and New Testament criticism: Luke's identification as the physician mentioned in Colossians is not clear-cut, much less established. Early traditions say that they were the same, and Irenaeus of Lyons believed it, which is pretty good evidence for such things, but there is no convincing proof. But more than that, not to go into detail, Luke may have been from Cyrene originally, like some other early and prominent Christians. And that might very well mean that he was also a *Niger*, or black man. Again, no proof, though an interesting thing to think about. But whoever he was, González tells us, because of Luke/Acts, we need to know him as best as we can. Near the beginning of the first chapter, *"Luke and the History of Humankind"*, González notes that there is today a widespread ignorance of history. (Loc. 137) As a retired history teacher from another field, I think he's onto something important here. But it's not just that people don't know the history of a particular time and place or another: everyone knows some times and places in history, usually related to their own history and heritage, and not others. What he means is that people often don't understand how history is created, and how it works in our own lives and in our cultures. And this is particularly important because Luke/Acts is not just another history, like those written by Julius Caesar or Josephus or even Joseph Ellis or Howard Zinn. Luke's history as related in Luke/Acts gives us the context for all of life. (Loc. 113) I'm sure it bothers González and most members of our guild just as it does me when we hear someone say something like *"who cares, that's*

history, as if anything historical doesn't matter anymore. González teaches those who haven't learned it yet that history is always about the past, the present, and the future. As you read this book you will learn not only some history and theology, but you will learn something about history itself. And as González points out, good history always includes some geography, politics, and the socio-economic system of the time and place it takes as its topic. In the second chapter, "Luke and the History of Israel," González focuses on some of the things we learn about the history of Israel and the early church in Luke/Acts. It is here that he introduces his readers to the concept of typology, which is a way of interpreting history through God's words and actions to and in the history of Israel. This is how first the Jews and then Christians read their holy scriptures. He gives lots of examples of how that worked in Luke, and once she knows about this, she will be thinking about it when she reads other parts of the Scriptures as well. There is so much here, it would be easy to write a very long review. Chapter titles will give you an idea of what follows: III. Luke and the Great Reversal IV. Luke and Gender V. Luke and Salvation VI. Food and Drink in Luke's Theology VII. Luke and Worship VIII. Luke and the Holy Spirit Conclusion: Luke's Open Invitation There is so much to think about here. Providentially, I just started Luke again in my cycle of daily gospel chapter readings, which I will follow with Acts. I am sure that as I read through Luke/Acts over almost the next two months I will encounter something new to think about in almost every chapter based on # The Story Luke Tells. # Because of my own interests, I found the chapter on the Holy Spirit to be particularly engaging. And this is a good example of why we need someone like Justo González to teach us about how to read the Bible, and how to think about our faith—not what to think about it—and so much more. If you had asked me before I read this book who was the main character in Acts, I would have said—like almost everyone else, I would guess—Paul. But that's not right, because the main "character" in the Acts of the Apostles is the Holy Spirit! In fact, as we learn throughout the book, the Holy Spirit is center stage at the beginning of both Luke and Acts, and is on every page of both books, though more openly in Acts. Over and over again, as with this, I would read a sentence, paragraph, or a section and think, "oh, yeah, how come I never realized that?" The conclusion needs to be mentioned too, because it connects to the introduction and the idea of Luke as historian, and Luke/Acts as history. Unlike other history books, which begin and end at a certain point in time, usually a milestone of some sort, Acts doesn't provide us with a nice, neat, and tidy end. What happens to Paul after the shipwreck on Malta and his arrival in Italy is a mystery that we may never solve with much certainty. I cannot imagine that someone who would read this book all the way

through would not want to learn more about Luke and his writings. And after reading this, I certainly want to read more of the writings of Justo González. This is good material, and González writes in an engaging, entertaining, and most edifying style. I don't have any complaints about the book, but I do have a minor quibble with the Kindle version. I have the basic Kindle, but I also have the Kindle app on my Windows 8. If you want to go to the table of contents, you have to go the beginning of the book, and then hit the page back on the Kindle itself, or go to the cover and click forward to get the table of contents. A minor quibble, I admit. The other problem with reading it on my Kindle, of course, is that I can't lend it around as I would like to. I recommend this book strongly.

Excellent work! His 8 insights into Luke really brought out the vibrant nature of the book. If you want a fresh look at one of the most important books in the Bible, look no further.

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