



# Doing theology Lukewise

## *Luke as theologian and storyteller*

The inaugural professorial lecture of  
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## What is theology and who is a theologian?

- **Greek** θεολογία *theologia* = 'God words'
- θεολόγος 'theologian' in Liddell & Scott's Greek lexicon
  - *one who discourses of the gods*, of **poets** such as Hesiod and Orpheus; of **cosmologists** (like the Orphics); of **diviners and prophets**.
  - **theologian**: ὁ θεολόγος = Moses (Philo)
- 11th century Greek manuscripts:  
'The revelation to John **the theologian** (τοῦ θεολόγου)'

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## What is a theologian (θεολόγος)?

- **Allen Brent**, 'John as *Theologos*: The Imperial Mysteries and the Apocalypse', *Journal for the Study of the NT* (1999): 87-102.
- **role in pagan cults or cults of deified emperors**
  - storytelling through drama and music
  - director and choreographer
  - spoke eulogy on the emperor
  - took emperor's role in drama

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## So what is 'theology'?

- not a purely rational, intellectual exercise
  - cf. Augustine: 'reasoning or discussion concerning the Deity' (*City of God* 8.1)
- New Testament authors seeking a wholehearted and rounded response to God in Christ
  - loving God with heart, soul, mind and strength  
Mark 12:30
- theology is speaking about God in order to evoke a response of faith, love and obedience

## Luke does theology through stories

I Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, 2 just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, 3 I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed.

Luke 1:1-4

## Luke does theology through stories

- The death of Jesus
  - predicted by Jesus
    - Luke 9:31, 51; 12:50; 13:32-33; 17:25
  - interpreted using Scripture
    - Luke 18:31-33 everything written must be fulfilled
    - 20:17; Psalm 118:22
    - 22:37; Isaiah 53:12
    - 24:26-27 Moses and the prophets
    - 24:44 everything in the law, the prophets and the Psalms
    - 24:46 it is written

## Luke's story of Jesus' death: Luke 23

- Jesus is innocent
  - Pilate vv 4, 14, 22
  - Herod v 15
  - the criminal on the cross v 41
  - the centurion v 47
  - the people v 48
  - Joseph of Arimathea v 51

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## Luke's story of Jesus' death: Luke 23

- Jesus is innocent
- the charges against Jesus are false v 2
  - subverting the nation
  - forbidding tribute to Caesar
  - calls himself a king

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## Luke's story of Jesus' death: Luke 23

- Jesus is innocent
- the charges against Jesus are false
- Barabbas vv 18-25
  - certainly guilty
  - the exchange with Jesus

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## Luke's story of Jesus' death: Luke 23

- Jesus is innocent
- the charges against Jesus are false
- Barabbas
- the two criminals vv 39-43
  - the first wants Jesus to save him from death
  - the second wants Jesus to save him through death

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## Luke's story of Jesus' death: Luke 23

- Jesus is innocent
- the charges against Jesus are false
- Barabbas
- the two criminals
- the darkness vv 44-45; cf. Rev 21:25

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## Luke's story of Jesus' death: Luke 23

- Jesus is innocent
- the charges against Jesus are false
- Barabbas
- the two criminals
- the darkness
- the temple curtain v 45
  - God abandons the Holy of Holies for the world

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## Luke's story of Jesus' death: Luke 23

- Jesus is innocent
- the charges against Jesus are false
- Barabbas
- the two criminals
- the darkness
- the temple curtain
- Simon of Cyrene v 26
  - father of Alexander and Rufus cf. Rom 16:13
  - modelling cross-bearing Luke 9:23; 14:17

## Luke does theology through characters

- Characters human and divine
  - Steve Walton, 'The Acts—of God? What is the "Acts of the Apostles" All About?' *Evangelical Quarterly* 80 (2008): 291-306.
- Characterisation
  - direct—telling
  - indirect—showing
- Three kinds of characters
  - flat: small number of predictable traits
  - stock: only one key trait
  - round: variety of (potentially conflicting) traits

## The reader's reaction to characters

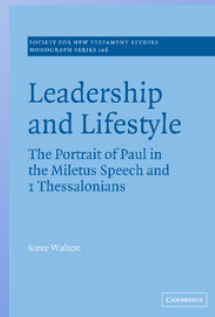
- empathy—strong identification with character
  - the disciples
- sympathy—less strong identification
  - the woman who washes Jesus feet  
Luke 7:36-50
- antipathy—alienation from character
  - Judas

## The reader's reaction to characters

- The disciples
  - called to be with Jesus after prayer Luke 6:12-16
    - but little faith 8:25; fail with demon 9:40
  - blessed 10:23; see need to learn to pray 11:1
    - but fall asleep rather than pray 22:40, 45-46
  - Jesus opens their minds to Scripture 24:37, 32, 45
  - Jesus renews their commitment 24:44-53
  - the Spirit transforms them Acts 2:1-4
  - prayer
    - response to the Sanhedrin 4:23-30
    - response to Peter's imprisonment 12:5, 6-11, 15, 16

## Luke does theology through speeches

- Acts 20:18-35; Luke 22:14-38
  - faithful fulfilment of ministry
  - suffering
  - wealth and work
  - the death of Jesus



## Luke does theology through speeches

	Acts 20	Luke 22
faithful fulfilment of ministry	'service' v 24; 'I serve' v 19 humility v 19	Jesus as 'the one who serves' vv 26, 27
suffering	trials through the Jewish people v 19 future suffering vv 23, 24	'trial' v 28 future suffering v 15
work and wealth	Paul's example to follow vv 33-35	Jesus' example to follow vv 35-38
the death of Jesus	God obtained the church through the death of his own v 28	institution of the eucharist vv 19-20 coming betrayal vv 21-22

## Luke does theology through patterns

- church life in Acts 2:42

They were devoting themselves to

- the apostles' teaching
- and the fellowship,
- the breaking of bread,
- and the prayers.

## Luke does theology through patterns

- church life in Acts 2:43-47

43 Fear kept coming on everyone, and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. 44 All who had come to believe were together and the used to hold everything in common; 45 they used to sell their possessions and belongings and distribute the proceeds to all, as anyone had need. 46 Day by day, spending much time together in the temple and breaking bread in homes, they shared food with joy and singleness of heart, 47 praising God and having favour with the whole people. Every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.

## Luke does theology through patterns

- church life in Troas Acts 20:7-12

7 On the first day of the week, when we met to break bread, Paul was instructing them; since he intended to leave the next day, he continued speaking until midnight. 8 There were many lamps in the room upstairs where we were meeting. 9 A young man named Eutychus, who was sitting in the window, began to sink off into a deep sleep while Paul talked still longer. Overcome by sleep, he fell to the ground three floors below and was picked up dead. 10 But Paul went down, and bending over him took him in his arms, and said, 'Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him.' 11 Then Paul went upstairs, and after he had broken bread and eaten, he continued to converse with them until dawn; then he left. 12 Meanwhile they had taken the boy away alive and were not a little comforted.



These slides are available at:  
<http://stevewalton.info>

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