

# [Peter and the sifting](https://assignbuster.com/peter-and-the-sifting/)

THE SIFTING OF PETER AND THE DISCIPLESIntroductionThe last Passover meal Jesus has with his disciples takes place within the farewell speech (Luke 22: 14-38). Luke records Peter??™s denial in a different way not found in the other Gospels. However, there is a particular passage (22: 31-34) that produces so many different questions dealing with Satan and how he tempts humans, along with the prayer Jesus prays for Peter and the apostles. What did Jesus pray for his disciples and Peter What are Satan??™s limits Does he have to go before God every time to tempt humankind Can Satan specifically ask to sift certain individuals like Job or Peter These are possible questions one might have when reading Peter??™s denial in Luke 22: 31-34. To grasp this passage, the background information of the text is vital. The authorship of Luke is heavily debated. Luke??™s name does not appear until A.

D. 175. The date of Luke is unknown being placed before A. D. 70 and after A.

D. 70. The genre of Luke is considered a Gospel narrative though has similarities to a historiography. The letter is addressed to Theophilus; but after this fact the audience is unclear.

The passage of Peter??™s denial can be broken down into two parts (22: 31-32 & 22: 33-34). Jesus is desperately trying to grab Peter??™s attention in verse thirty-one by calling him Simon. Then, in verse thirty-two Jesus encourages Peter to strengthen his brothers when he has turned from his sin.

In verse thirty-three Peter assures Jesus that he will go to the grave with him. The last verse, thirty-four, is the tragic prediction of Peter??™s denial. This paper now turns to a deeper look; a deeper look to fully understand the scripture through study and the background. Background InformationAuthorshipReferred to as the Gospel of Luke it was not always known by that name, not until A. D. 175 does an actual name appear on this particular document. In the beginning of Luke, one finds out that the author of this book did not personally see the acts of Christ, though he did investigate the eyewitnesses that were with Christ (1: 1-2) at the time of his ministry.

There are helpful hints given throughout the New Testament, and other outside sources, which shed light on the authorship of this Gospel. The language of Luke was thought to favor medical terms. It is evident in the New Testament that Paul refers to his confidant, ??? Luke,??? in more than one account. One passage in particular is Colossians 4: 14, where Paul directly mentions the beloved physician Luke.

There are instances that show medical interest in the third Gospel that one does not see the Matthew, Mark, or John. However, H. J. Cadebury disputes this idea, showing parallels in similar documents with medical terms whose authors were not considered doctors. There is other evidence to the authorship of this particular Gospel.

It comes from the book of Acts where there are four instances that the pronoun ??? we??? is used: Acts 16: 10-17, where it disappears after verse seventeen then reappears in Acts 20: 5-15, 21: 1-8, 27: 1-28: 16. The author of Acts does not mention who this ??? we??? is or whether it is his experience or somebody else??™s. There could be another source used by the author of Luke and Acts.

It is also possible that these specific ??? we??? passages do not provide credible information on the author of Luke and Acts. According to Joel Green information about the Gospel Luke, has to be gathered throughout Paul??™s letters and from Luke and Acts. Since the author does not state his name at the beginning of the letter the authorship should not be important to the reader. Nevertheless, for purposes of this research, Luke is going to be the named the author. The genre is of equal importance in the historical cultural background, though there are not as many questions concerning the genre of the Gospel of Luke.

GenreCadebury classifies this type of literature as a ??? historiography,??? similar to the Greco-Roman historiography of that time. Luke is also a one of a kind book, and, according to Darrell Bock, is a unique Gospel in itself. It does not give just a biography of the life of Jesus, but also gives details about Jesus??™ ministry. Luke 1: 1-4 assures the reader the author researched his writings.

Fred Craddock asserts that Luke is a Gospel narrative. Instead of directly confronting problems in a church, or among believers, the author uses instances in the life of Jesus to help portray how one should live. As stated above, this text can be broken up into three distinct sections. The preface, Luke 1: 1-4, is considered a good classical Greek style. A Hebraic taste is found in chapters one and two, and a Hellenistic style of Greek is found from chapters three forward this could be the strong use of the Septuagint. Luke??™s knowledge of the Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic languages, using words that are not found elsewhere in the New Testament, proves he was an expert. It is evident that Luke was educated in the various languages and had a unique way in writing his Gospel. The date of when Luke was written, like the authorship, is debatable.

Date This Gospel has been dated sometime after A. D. 70, because Luke notes Jerusalem??™s destruction so vividly in (19: 41-44) and (21: 20-24).

C. H. Dodd sees these passages not as Luke talking about Jerusalem??™s destruction, but as God??™s eventual judging of Israel for unfaithfulness. A more reasonable date is around the sixties. Luke and Acts make up a two-part book; the Gospel probably released first. The last event in Acts is in A. D.

62, and it is interesting that Luke does not note the death of Paul. So, it is possible that A. D. 62 is a better date for when the Gospel was written.

When one looks at the whole picture of the actual date of Luke, there is no undisputable evidence that it was written before the destruction of Jerusalem or sound evidence that is was written afterwards. To place a date on Luke is extremely difficult when taking into account all the different evidence. The audience of Luke is the next topic. AudienceIn Luke 1: 1-4 the letter is addressed to Theophilus.

The origin of Theophilus is uncertain; all that is known is Luke writes to him, but Luke knew that Theophilus was probably not going to be the only reader of this book. The audience of Luke was first century Christians of different class, race, and gender. Luke and Acts supports he was probably directing a diverse group of people.

In Acts 17: 4, 12 he refers to special women who was considered of high standing in the community. He also refers to individuals with important titles during the first century such as Cornelius the centurion, and Lydia, who possibly was wealthy. Luke places a great deal of emphasis on these people were outstanding people. Luke tries to influence these people to help those who are of a different class, race, and gender.

The broad spectrum of people that Luke-Acts notes is tremendous ranging from Jews, prominent Greek men and women, poor, and children. Literary ContextLuke 22: 31-34 is located in the Passion narrative (22: 1-23: 56). The last supper, arrest and trial of Jesus, and the crucifixion take place in this context. Luke 22: 31-34 is within the farewell speech (22: 14-38) and the setting of this narrative is different than the other Synoptic Gospels. It is being told while the disciples are still at the meal and not on the way to the Mount of Olives. Luke stresses the importance of God??™s purpose and plan being worked out. In this narrative all the disciples learn they will soon abandon their leader.

It is at this meal that Jesus announces his betrayal, they dispute who is the greatest, and predicts Peter??™s denial. To help understand Luke 22: 31-34 clearly and the meaning it had on the original readers, it must be read within the entire text (22: 14-38). The exegesis begins with verse thirty-one. The Testing of Peter and the Disciples??? The Sifting??? Luke is the only author out of the Gospels to mention Satan asking to sift the disciples like wheat.

The idea of sifting wheat was an agriculture custom; Jesus used this process to help explain what Satan had asked to do. The sifting separated the wheat from the chaff, the good from bad. It may have been based upon Amos 9: 9. The actual process of the sifting wheat took two times, according to John Nolland.

The farmer tossed the wheat up in the air, the wheat feel back down, and the chaff was blown away. The sifting of wheat often took place in a windy location to help blow the chaff away. However, it is unclear if the grain was let through or retained by the sifting. Joseph Fitzmyer claims that even though the content of ??? sifting??? is similar to Amos 9: 9, the development in the Septuagint is different. Connecting the two passages does not come out positively. Satan??™s hope after he ??? sifts??? the disciples is that they will be blown away like chaff.

This is seen as Satan??™s last thrust to break up the apostles, hoping they will fail and fall away from Christ. When Jesus speaks directly to Peter he is trying to get his attention by referring to his former name, Simon. The importance of the situation is shown when Jesus pronounces Peter??™s name twice. Luke 6: 14 mentions that Jesus changed the name of Simon to Peter. The original readers thought that Peter was at risk of loosing his role and that his faith would be tested by the upcoming events.

Norval Gledenhuys view is when Jesus spoke Peter??™s first name it is symbolic to remind him he is human. The ??? you??? in verse thirty-one, in its Greek form, is directed toward all the apostles, not just Peter. In some translations ??? you??? is plural. The original Greek means, ??? Satan has obtained you by asking.??? This points to the fact that Satan had no power in obtaining the apostles, and it is only through God that he is allowed to ??? sift??? them. Satan is requesting to sift the entire group; his attack affects all of the disciples. The PrayerJesus knows that one of his followers must step in and fulfill this leadership position, in a physical sense, after he departs them. Jesus turns to Peter to encourage his brothers after he repents from his sins.

Peter asserts he is ready now without prayer or repentance. Jesus never left the side of his disciples or Peter. Fitzmyer points out that the prayer Jesus prays is not to be interpreted as priestly intercession, but more along the lines of Jesus being Peter??™s supporter.

In verse thirty-two, ??? I have prayed for you??? the ??? you,??? is singular and is focused towards Simon Peter. Darrell Bock also notes that the pronouns are second person singular referring directly to Peter. When Jesus spoke to Peter, Luke used the verb phrase, ??? when you have turned again??? to reference repentance and appears throughout Luke??™s writings. This word is epistrepho and is found in Acts 3: 19; 9: 35. Peter did fail after he denied Christ, but in the first part of Acts 1-5 he renews his brothers. Jesus??™ prayer for Peter is to strengthen his brothers.

This prayer is vague and not thoroughly explained, though the effects Peter had on the first century Church were tremendous. The Greek word used in this verse for strengthen ??? strengthen your brothers??? is sterizo and is also found in Acts, 1 Peter, and 1 Thessalonians. In John 21: 15-17 Peter is restored after the denial of Jesus and Satan failed in the sifting of Peter and the apostles.

It is possible that Luke himself did not have a clear understanding of Peter??™s succeeding in this role. To Prison and DeathIn verse thirty-three Peter announces that he is willing to go to the grave for Christ. He is ignorant of the fact that he will need to repent from his sins and that he will fail on his own. When Peter declares he is ??? ready,??? the Greek word hetoimos is used in the context of Peter being ready to follow Jesus to prison and death.

Peter, proclaiming he would go to prison and even die for Jesus, in the given text, appears false. It is, however, considered by Luke a very truthful statement made by a post-Easter Peter, because he did in fact go to jail in (Acts 5: 13; 12: 3). Peter??™s appeal to Jesus, claiming he would go to jail and die for the cause, is ironic.

Jesus talked about the possibility of prison and persecution in (Luke 21: 12). Peter will ultimately sacrifice his life for Jesus, but at the moment he was not prepared for the ??? sifting??? Satan had planned. There are striking differences in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew dealing with Peter??™s denial. Mark states that the disciples will stumble and fail (14: 27-31).

Peter is quick to mention that he will not stumble; he sees himself as the rare exception. Also in Matthew 26: 31-35 Peter announces that he will not be the one who deserts Christ. However, in Luke, Peter appears less confident in the other two Gospels. Peter states that he will die for Jesus in Matthew and Mark, yet mentions nothing of prison. In Luke he mentions prison first.

Fitzmyer claims Luke maybe coloring the situation since he makes reference that Peter does go to jail in Acts 5: 18; 12: 23. It is unclear if Luke was just summarizing the situation on firm outcomes or if he was indeed using another source. The other Gospels do place this particular passage in a different setting, which is after the departure to the garden, though in Luke the setting is before.

DenialThere are three elements in verse thirty-four that Jesus discusses. The first is that Jesus knew what was going to happen and understood the events that would take place. Jesus not only knew Peter would deny him, but other events would follow such as his repentance in (22: 62), seeing Christ risen from the dead (24: 34), strengthening the brothers (Acts 1: 15), prison (Acts 12: 3-5), and dying for Christ (John 21: 18-19). The second element is the extreme of Peter??™s lies denying he even worked with Jesus. After Peter had denied knowing Jesus, he had a broken and contrite heart (Luke 22: 61-62). Even though Peter avoided capture from the chief officials, he would later stand up for his beliefs in (Acts 4-5). This proves that Jesus??™ prayer for Peter was extremely effective.

The third element is that Peter tells Jesus that he was ready to die for him, though he was gravely mistaken. He performed the unimaginable by denying Jesus three times before the rooster crowed. Jesus not only told Peter that he would reject him once, but three times that night. Peter was probably one of the first of Jesus??™ followers to actually grasp that Jesus was about to die. Christ??™s plan is brought to completion through the disciples and Peter??™s ??? sifting.??? APPLICATIONThe Power of SatanJames Packer gives an interesting theory on the power and presence of Satan.

According to Packer, one cannot understand Satan better than God. Satan was created by God and must be seen in light of God. The omnipresence associated with God is very biblical and real.

The fact that he knows everything about the six billion people on earth is astounding. Psalms 139 shows that God knows every action and thought that an individual makes. God is not confined by time because he created it. But the opposite is true: time exists in God. Satan and his angels according to 2 Peter 2: 4 and Jude 6 are doomed to hell. God has placed a limit on their powers, but the anger toward God and Christians has no limit.

Fallen angel??™s goal is to ruin the spiritual life of believers and keep others from knowing God. Referred to as the ??? tempter??? in 1 Thessalonians 3: 5, Satan tries to lead believers into a snare, presenting sin that is perceived good, but actually is bad. Satan or demons will eventually try to deceive individuals as seen in Ephesians 6: 13. The spiritual war that is taking place is real, and one must not be shocked when Satan turns his ??? fire??? upon them. A question may then arise about whether Satan is omnipresent and the answer according to Packer is ??? no.??? Satan may be able to tempt different people at the same time, giving him multi-presence. The omnipresence described earlier is the power of God knowing everything. It is evident in Scripture that Satan comes and goes (Job 1: 7, 12), yet is restricted to his locations in regard to time (Matthew 4: 3).

How then does he attack individuals at the same time The answer is not found in scripture, though two theories are accepted. Theory one is that all angels and Satan have the power to go about looking into people??™s lives and move about more freely than humans, who are restricted by time and space. This theory gives Satan the power of multi-presence. The second theory is when people attribute evil to the opposite leader but it is the followers who carryout the assault. An example of this is if a leader attacks something or someone, it is his men under him that actually carry out the assault. In the same sense Satan is the leader but it is the demons that carry out the attack.

However, there is hope in James 4: 7 when he tells Christians that Satan will flee from them if resistance is shown. The fleeing of Satan in this Scripture shows that he is not omnipresent and proves that Christians will come under attack, resist him, and he will run. To relate Luke 22: 31-34 relate to the present time can be difficult and possibly troublesome.

These problems come from differing degrees on how one might interpret Scripture in the Luke passage, but also in other places. There is also an uncertainty about Satan and how his evil plan is worked out. Can one assume that all temptation comes directly from Satan Or can the evil desires of humans create temptation and Satan just watches closely waiting to deliver the ultimate trapTo understand sin one could look at James 1: 12-15. It is here that James talks about followers of Christ being tempted and still continue in faithfulness. The passage goes on to say that Christians should not blame God for being tempted because God tempts no one. It is one??™s own selfish desire that leads to temptation.

However, it does not say that Satan cannot ask for permission to sift an individual as in Luke 22: 31-34. Therefore, to directly accuse Satan of sifting a person, as he did with Peter and Job, is not out of the picture. Satan demanding or asking God to tempt a follower is nothing new.

The first sight of Satan asking to tempt someone is in Job 1. It is here that Satan was wandering around the earth coming and going at his will. Satan does something interesting, he has to ask for permission to tempt Job. One can rightfully assume that Satan has no power over humans. The only power he has is that given to him by God.

Satan had no power over the disciples or Peter until he obtained it by asking God. Satan??™s main goal is to destroy whomever he ??? sifts??? hoping to prove disloyalty. It is possible that God is seeing if his followers are faithful to his call. This testing of faithfulness is extremely evident in Luke 22: 31-34. Satan hoped to blow the disciples like chaff so they would lose faith and hope. Jesus prayed for his disciples and Peter in Luke 22: 32.

He was intentionally and specifically praying for these individuals because of the sifting they endure. Whether the constant fighting of sin that Christians continue to struggle against caused by selfish desires. Or, if it is the sifting of Satan, there is hope. To continue thinking that one can fight Satan alone is foolish. Like Peter, failure is close by if one does not seek God through prayer and realize that all are subject to failure.

James 4: 7-8 proves that if one stands up against the Evil One, by first relying on God, Satan flees. The writer of Ephesians 6: 10-20 encourages the believer to persevere and fight the good fight. ConclusionThe findings of this research may possibly bring about more questions than answers. The prayer that is prayed for the disciples and Peter was a prayer that would encourage them and strengthen them when they do, in fact, repent after the ??? sifting.??? Satan is seen as one who supplies occasions for failure and inspires failure. In the following verses, as examined previously, Peter boldly proclaimed he would not fail. Though, his pride of being the only one to stand up for Jesus was short lived. In the last part of the denial Jesus knew the extent of Peter??™s lies and the number of times Peter would claim to not know him.

Taking into consideration the historical background, the different possibilities that lie within the bounds of authorship, date, and audience are uncertain. To say that Luke is indeed the author of what is known as Luke and Acts is difficult. To place a date on when the Gospel was written is even more difficult. The audience of the letter is uncertain other than Theophilus, whom it is addressed. Even though certain details cannot be found in Luke about authorship, date, and audience these issues have little impact to the reading of this text. The Gospel of Luke is an interesting narrative. It is in Luke that the unique passage of 22: 31-34 is found.

It is here that a better idea of Satan is found, and how he ??? sifts??? the followers of Christ. It is here that one sees the power of Jesus??™ prayer for Peter and the disciples, and their role in the first century Church. It is here that pride can blind Christians into thinking they are ready for whatever trap Satan has set.

It is here that one learns the power of Jesus, defeating Satan once again.