**The Gospel of Luke**

**Lesson 1** Luke 1:4-4:13 An Orderly Account!

**Questions:**

1. Read the following summary from www.gotquestions.org.

**Author:** The Gospel of Luke does not identify its author. From Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-3,   
it is clear that the same author wrote both Luke and Acts, addressing both to “most excellent Theophilus,” possibly a Roman dignitary. The tradition from the earliest days of the church has been that Luke, a physician, and a close companion of the Apostle Paul, wrote both Luke and Acts (Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11). This would make Luke the only Gentile to pen any books of Scripture.

**Date of Writing:** The Gospel of Luke was likely written between A.D. 58 and 65.

**Purpose of Writing:** As with the other two synoptic gospels—Matthew and Mark—this book’s purpose is to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ and all He “began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven” (Acts 1:1-2). The Gospel of Luke is unique in that it is a meticulous history—an “orderly account” (Luke 1:3) consistent with Luke’s medical mind—often giving details the other accounts omit. Luke’s history of the life of the Great Physician emphasizes His ministry to—and compassion for—Gentiles, Samaritans, women, children, tax collectors, sinners, and others regarded as outcasts in Israel.

**Key Verses:**

Luke 2:4-7: “So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”

Luke 3:16: “John answered them all, ‘I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.’”

Luke 4:18-19, 21: “‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.’ Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Luke 18:31-32: “Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, ‘We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again.’”

Luke 23:33-34: “When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’”

Luke 24:1-3: “On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.”

**Brief Summary:** Called the most beautiful book ever written, the Gospel of Luke begins by telling us about Jesus’ parents; the birth of His cousin, John the Baptist; Mary and Joseph’s journey to Bethlehem, where Jesus is born in a manger; and the genealogy of Christ through Mary. Jesus’ public ministry reveals His perfect compassion and forgiveness through the stories of the prodigal son, the rich man and Lazarus, and the Good Samaritan. While many believe in this unprejudiced love that surpasses all human limits, many others—especially   
the religious leaders—challenge and oppose the claims of Jesus. Christ’s followers are encouraged to count the cost of discipleship, while His enemies seek His death on the cross. Finally, Jesus is betrayed, tried, sentenced and crucified. But the grave cannot hold Him!   
His Resurrection assures the continuation of His ministry of seeking and saving the lost.

**Connections:** Since Luke was a Gentile, his references to the Old Testament are relatively few compared to those in Matthew’s gospel, and most of the OT references are in the words spoken by Jesus rather than in Luke’s narration. Jesus used the Old Testament to defend against Satan’s attacks, answering him with “It is written” (Luke 4:1-13); to identify Himself as the promised Messiah (Luke 4:17-21); to remind the Pharisees of their inability to keep the Law and their need of a Savior (Luke 10:25-28, 18:18-27); and to confound their learning when they tried to trap and trick Him (Luke 20).

**Practical Application:** The Gospel of Luke gives us a beautiful portrait of our compassionate Savior. Jesus was not “turned off” by the poor and the needy; in fact, they were a primary focus of His ministry. Israel at the time of Jesus was a very class-conscious society. The weak and downtrodden were literally powerless to improve their lot in life and were especially open to the message that “the kingdom of God is near you” (Luke 10:9).   
This is a message we must carry to those around us who desperately need to hear it. Even   
in comparatively wealthy countries—perhaps especially so—the spiritual need is dire. Christians must follow the example of Jesus and bring the good news of salvation to   
the spiritually poor and needy. The kingdom of God is near and the time grows shorter   
every day.[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. Read Luke 1. An orderly account!

Luke was the beloved physician of Colossians 4:14, “Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.” He used more medical terms than Hippocrates, the father of medicine. The choice of Luke by the Holy Spirit to write the third gospel reveals that there are no accidental writers of Scripture. There was a supernatural selection of Luke. There were “not many wise” called, but Luke belongs to that category. He and Paul were evidently on a very high intellectual level as well as a high spiritual level. This explains partially why they traveled together and obviously became fast friends in the Lord. Dr. Luke would rank as a scientist of his day. Also, he wrote the best Greek of any of the New Testament writers, including Paul. He was an accurate historian, as we shall see. Luke was a poet; he alone records the lovely songs of Christ. Luke was an artist; he sketches for us Christ’s marvelous, matchless parables.

A great deal of tradition surrounds the life of Dr. Luke. He writes his Gospel from Mary’s viewpoint, which confirms the tradition that he received his information for his Gospel from her. Surely, he conferred with her. Also, there is every reason to believe that he was a Gentile. Most scholars concur in this position…

Dr. Luke wrote his Gospel with a twofold purpose. First, his purpose was literary and historical. Of the four Gospels, Luke’s Gospel is the most complete historical narrative. There are more wide-reaching references to institutions, customs, geography, and history of that period than are found in any of the other Gospels. Secondly, his purpose was spiritual. He presented the person of Jesus Christ as the perfect, divine Man and Savior of the world. Jesus was God manifest in the flesh.[[2]](#footnote-2)

1. Why do you think Luke establishes early in his gospel that his account is well-documented and that he has relied so heavily on eye-witness accounts?

* How does this affect your trust and faith in Luke’s ‘orderly account’?
* How will Luke’s orderly account help prepare you to defend your faith? (For example, Luke’s use of eye-witness accounts.)

1. Contrast the faith of Mary with that of Zechariah.

* It has been said that all God really wants from the world is to be believed. Why is faith so important to God (Consider the relationship between a father and his son)?
* How would you describe your faith in God?

1. Review verses 26-38. Fulfilled prophecy provides amazing evidence for the proof that Scripture is completely inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21). Thus, the Bible is the inerrant and perfect Word of, and from, God (Psalm 119:160).

Read 2 Samuel 7:12; Psalm 2:7; Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:1-10; Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:15;   
Matthew 1:6, 16-17; Luke 1:26-27, 32; 3:23, 31; Acts 13:32-37; Romans 1:1-4.

* From whom did Jesus come?
* How would you use this fact in a court of law to defend God’s Word and the miraculous nature of the birth of Christ?

1. Consider verses 45-55. What essential truth do you learn from Mary’s song? How does   
   it challenge, convict, or encourage you?
2. What important truth do you learn from Zachariah’s song (verses 67-80)? In what ways does it challenge, convict, or encourage you?
3. Read Luke 2. A Savior is Born!
4. The word *gospel* means “good news!” What is the gospel message found in verses 10-11?

* Why is the gospel such good news for the world (John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-5; Romans 1:16-17)?
* Have you believed in this good news, the gospel of Jesus Christ? If not, what is holding you back? If yes, share how this has changed your life?

1. What was the shepherds’ response to this good news (verses 15-17)? How are you challenged by their response?
2. Focus on verses 25-35. Simeon was a devout believer in God and His Word (the Old Testament). He knew from Scripture that God had promised to send a Messiah who would be the world’s Savior. The Lord had revealed to Simeon that he would not die   
   until he had seen this promised Messiah with his own eyes (verse 26).

* Verse 30 says, “For my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared in   
  the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.” Explain what this verse means and how the gospel was intended for   
  all peoples of the world? How is the gospel a light for revelation (John 8:12; 16:13;   
  2 Corinthians 3:15)?
* Verses 34-35 says, “Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother, “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own heart too.” Explain the following phrases:

The falling and rising of many in Israel (1 Corinthians 1:21-25)

A sign that will be spoken against (Matthew 10:34-36; John 15:18-21)

* Do you see any evidence of these truths in our world today? Explain.

1. Read Luke 3. John, the Baptist, Prepares the Way!

Luke, with a true historian’s approach, dates the ministry of John the Baptist with secular history. He places the emphasis upon John’s message of repentance as the condition for the coming of the Messiah. From the Mosaic system of washing in water, which was a common custom of immersion in that day, John baptized those who came to him as merely a preparation (a moral reformation) for the coming of Christ. Christ would baptize by the Holy Spirit—a real transformation…

This chapter contains a great deal of detail; Luke is a stickler for accuracy. Six characters   
are identified in this verse which allow us to date the time. Caesar Augustus was emperor when the Lord Jesus Christ was born, but when John began his ministry Tiberius Caesar   
was emperor. Secular history, which must supply us with the details, tells us that Tiberius was brilliant but brutal. He was clever but cunning. He was inhuman and profane. He attempted to master the world. Next the names of the puppet rulers are given.

Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests. Why were there two high priests? Two high priests reveals the power of Rome over the religion of Jerusalem in that day. Annas was the power behind the throne, but Caiaphas was the one Rome put out in front.

The normal experience for John would have been to serve in the temple as his father had. He should have been a leader in the temple, but he despised it. Instead, he went into the wilderness and renounced his priesthood. He did not wish to serve in a corrupt system, and so he became a prophet. That is the picture: John was a priest and he became a prophet…

He was a priest, a prophet, and a preacher. He was a priest by birth because he was the son of Zacharias, but he was called by God to be a prophet.[[3]](#footnote-3)

1. John’s sole mission in life was to point to the Messiah. When Jesus came to visit him out in the desert, this is exactly what he did. John 1:35 states, “The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!”

* Focus on verses 15-17. John says, “I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come…He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat   
  into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

Explain these phrases:

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36:26-27; Ephesians 1:13-14;   
Acts 1:8; 2:1-4)

His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire (Matthew 25:31-46)

* How do these phrases impact you? Do they give you cause for concern, or do you have blessed assurance that you are truly indwelt by the Holy Spirit and do not need to fear the coming judgment of God one day?

The most unwelcome message, even today, is the voice of the prophet. The world will not receive a man who contradicts its philosophy of life. If you want to be popular, and this is also true of preachers, you have to sing in unison with the crowd. God have mercy on the pulpit that is nothing in the world but the sounding board for what the congregation is saying. The world does not want to hear the voice of God, especially when that voice speaks of judgment. John’s message was very strong.[[4]](#footnote-4)

1. Focus on verses 21-22. In addition to John pointing to the Messiah, consider who else pointed to him. Luke is giving us historical evidence to move/stir people to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ in order that they might be saved. What is the significance of the baptism of Jesus (1 John 1:1-4)?

* Who ultimately confirms that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah? (Note: The English word *Messiah* comes from the Hebrew word for “anointed one,” and the English word *Christ* from the Greek word for “anointed one.”)
* How does this impact your faith?

1. Read Luke 4:1-13. The Temptation of Jesus!

Focus on Luke 4:3-13 along with Genesis 3:1-7 and 1 John 2:15-18.

1. J. Vernon McGee states that Jesus’ temptation “was a threefold temptation: physical, psychological and spiritual.”

Explain how the entire person of Jesus (body, soul, mind/spirit) was tempted by   
the following:

**Physical** (Luke 4:3; Gen. 3:6 (‘saw that it was good for food’); 1 John 2:16   
(‘the cravings of sinful man’):

**Psychological** (Luke 4:5-8; Gen. 3:6 (‘and pleasing to the eye’); 1 John 2:16 (‘the lust   
of the eyes’):

**Spiritual** (Luke 4:9-13; Gen. 3:6 (and ‘desirable for gaining wisdom’); 1 John 2:16   
(‘the pride of life’):

1. How do you see yourself tempted in the following areas?

* The cravings of sinful man
* The lust of the eyes
* The boasting of what he has and does (the pride of life)

1. What do you plan to implement in your daily routine to resist the pull of the world and follow more wholeheartedly after the Lord Jesus (Consider the two primary tools God has given us to help us resist: His Word and His Spirit)?

1. “Summary of the Gospel of Luke”Got Questions Ministries, accessed May 18, 2022, [https://www.gotquestions.org/Gospel-of-Luke.html] [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. J. Vernon McGee, THRU THE BIBLE COMMENTARY SERIES: LUKE, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991), vii-ix. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. J. Vernon McGee, THRU THE BIBLE COMMENTARY SERIES: LUKE, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991), 51-52. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. McGee, 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)