

The Gospel of Luke

Lesson 01

Welcome to the study of the gospel according to Luke!

Gospel means good news, in this case the good news of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as recorded by Luke.

E. Renan has spoken of this gospel as "...the most beautiful book there is," while C.K. Barrett has observed that Luke "...was more concerned with truth than beauty." W. Manson summarized the sentiments of both of these individuals by noting that "...Luke has cast his net wide and produced a gospel the most voluminous and varied, the most vibrant and sympathetic, the beautiful and sweetly reasonable of all that we possess." Widely read contemporary author and theologian R.C. Sproul has said that of the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, Luke is his favorite.

Tradition virtually unanimously holds that Luke is the author of the gospel, written around 60 – 63 AD, bears his name. He was a physician and historian who also wrote the book of Acts. Well known and highly respected Biblical commentator Leon Morris has pointed out that Luke's grand theme throughout his gospel is the love of God for His people as shown in the life of Jesus.

According to Morris, Luke's gospel "...is the longest of the four, and when Acts is added he has written more of the New Testament than any other single writer. Clearly a study of his writings is important for the student of the New Testament." Even more, it is important to study this gospel in order to obtain a proper understanding of who God is, who we are, and who Jesus Christ is in God's perfect plan of redemption for the elect people of God.

Preface

As you begin your study, take a moment to pray and ask God to give you an understanding of His most precious Word so that you might grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Read Luke 1:1-4.
 - A. To whom is Luke writing? What does this name mean? (See a footnote in your Bible or consult a Bible dictionary.)

 - B. From verse 1, what observation does Luke make regarding the "...things which have been accomplished among us" (Revised Standard Version, RSV) or the "...things that have been fulfilled among us" (New International Version, NIV)?

 - C. From verse 2:
 - (1) What does Luke say about those who "from the beginning" (RSV) or "from the first" (NIV) have handed down this material?

 - (2) Is this important? Why or why not?

- (3) What else characterized these individuals (e.g. what did they do? In practical terms, what do you think this means?

D. Read John 1:1-5, 14 and 4:21-26.

- (1) What was in the beginning?
- (2) With what or whom was it equated?
- (3) What did it become?
- (4) Who else was “in the beginning”?
 - (a) What were some of his attributes?
 - (b) What did he do?

F. Read Deuteronomy 8:3; Psalm 119:105 and John 17:17. What are some other characteristics of the Word?

2. Read Luke 1:3-4.

A. In your own words, what does this mean: “having followed all things closely” (RSV) or “since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning” (NIV)?

B. Why was Luke “writing an orderly account”?

(1) Using a dictionary, define “orderly.”

(2) In verse 4, the RSV uses the word “truth” while the NIV uses “certainty.” Use a dictionary to define these words.

(3) Why is it important for Theophilus and us to know the “certainty of the things you [we] have been taught” (NIV) or the “truth concerning the things of which you [we] have been informed” (RSV)?

- (4) Can you think of a time when “knowing the truth” has profoundly affected your life or altered your “world view”? Please explain.

3. Using the introduction of this lesson as well as the preface of Luke (1:1-4), what methodology did Luke employ that would distinguish him as a thoroughly reliable and accurate historian? Why is this important?

4. Read 2 timothy 3:16, Isaiah 55:8-11 and Hebrews 4:12-13. From God’s point of view, why is the study and application of God’s Word so important?

The Birth of John the Baptist Foretold

5. Read Luke 1:5-25.
 - A. Who are Zechariah and Elizabeth?

B. What do their names mean? (See a Bible footnote or dictionary.)

6. What idea is Luke conveying when he writes that “both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord’s commandments and regulations blamelessly” (1:6)? Does Luke mean they were without sin? Please cite Scripture to support your answer.

7. Verse 7 notes that Zechariah and Elizabeth had no children because Elizabeth was barren and they were both well along in years. What does Psalm 127:3-5 say about children?

8. From verses 8-10:

A. What was Zechariah’s division called to do?

B. What was Zechariah specifically called to do?

C. How was he chosen for this task?

- D. According to Proverbs 16:33, who was really responsible for calling Zechariah to perform this duty?
9. According to Psalm 141:2 and Revelation 5:8 and 8:3-4, what does incense represent?
10. Read Luke 1:11-17.
- A. In verse 11, the concept of “angel” is introduced. Using the following verses as your guide, describe the various types of angels; their characteristics, roles and functions; and how we are to relate to them: Luke 1:19, Hebrews 1:14 and 13:2, 1 Corinthians 6:3, 2 Corinthians 11:14, 2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6 and 9, and Matthew 25:41.
- B. Have you ever had the sense that perhaps you were entertaining angels unawares or that you were being aided by angels (ministering spirits) through some difficulty (Luke 1:14, Hebrews 13:2)? Please explain.

C. From the verses noted in 10 A above, name three angels and write something about each of them.

D. The angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah and announced that his prayer had been heard. What do you think his prayer might have been? Why?

(1) What did the angel say would happen?

(2) What name was Zechariah to give the boy? What does his name mean? (See a footnote or Bible dictionary.)

(3) Identify and list six aspects of his character that will distinguish the boy among men?

11. Read Luke 1:18-25.

A. How does Zechariah respond to the angelic proclamation?

B. In answering Zechariah,

- (1) What does the angelic being say his name is? (Use a footnote or Bible dictionary to define the meaning of his name.)
- (2) Where does he reside?
- (3) What is his role and purpose in appearing to Zechariah?
- (4) What judgment does he pronounce upon Zechariah? Why?
- (5) When would this restriction take effect? Use Scripture to support your answer.
- (6) What might be another reason for imposing this kind of sentence upon Zechariah?

C. After his time of service, Zechariah returns home.

(1) What happens after he returns home?

(2) What does Elizabeth do? What does she say?

(3) Considering what Elizabeth's name means, how does her name and pregnancy give credence to the fact that God always fulfills the promises He makes to His people, that He says what He means, and that He means what He says?