

# Luke

A Careful History of Jesus


## 6 Studies in Luke

For Individuals, Groups and 1:1

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## Leaders' Notes

Luke was a medical doctor, who set out to write a careful history “of the things that have been fulfilled among us” (1:1). His gospel account is volume 1 of his completed work, with the book of Acts volume 2. Luke 1:1 – 4 serve as the prologue or introduction, not just for his gospel, but for Acts as well.

Luke wasn't an eyewitness to the ministry of Jesus, but he describes how he investigated everything that was seen and heard by those who were eye-witnesses. We also know that Luke travelled extensively with the Apostle Paul.

Luke's gospel is the longest of the four gospels. In it, and the book of Acts, Luke addresses the question of how Gentiles could be recipients of the blessings that come through Jesus, the Jewish Messiah. As such, Luke has a particular eye for a Gentile audience.

Luke's writing shows a particular concern for the marginalised, for women, and for people who don't seem very religious by human standards.

Luke was written in the early 60s AD.

Further Reading:

IVP New Testament Commentary – available free online!

<http://mytmb.me/ivpluke>

## Notes for Study 1

Jewish males were required to travel to the temple three times each year; Passover, Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles. By the first century AD, many Jewish men who lived far from Jerusalem, made just one annual pilgrimage, for Passover.

Considering people often made these pilgrimages in a large caravan of people, sometimes with the men and older boys walking separately from the women and children, it is not inconceivable that Jesus could be missed for a day!

## Notes for Study 2

The quotation is from Isaiah 40:3 – 5, where God promises through Isaiah, that he will send a messenger to prepare the people for his own arrival amongst them.

John is considered the last of the Old Testament prophets (Matthew 13:13 – 14), and is identified by Jesus as the Elijah whom God had promised.

Luke's gospel particularly, and the NT in general, uses the phrases "baptised with the Holy Spirit" and "receiving the Spirit" as symbolic of salvation. See also Romans 8:9 & Ephesians 1:13 – 14.

## Notes for Study 3

Luke's account of Jesus' temptation must have been passed on from Jesus himself, since no one else was present! Jesus obviously wanted people to know exactly what kind of Messiah and Son of God he was.

In this section Luke shows that Jesus is a real human, descended from Adam, and then shows him facing real temptations like all humans face.

## Notes for Study 4

This section, particularly 16 – 21 is often described as the "programmatic passage" of Luke's gospel. It is here that

Jesus clearly states his understanding of his own mission, and defines his ministry.

Notice the agency of the Spirit in Jesus' arrival in Galilee, similar to his leading by the Spirit in 4:1

We learn in Acts and from other historical sources that it was common for visitors to be invited to teach in the synagogues.

The "year of the Lord's favour" (v 19) doesn't refer to the specific calendar year, but to the time of salvation that has arrived.

The quote in verses 18 - 19 is from Isaiah 61, where God promises to rescue his people Israel from the exile in Babylon (where Daniel, etc were carried). For Jesus to state that this promise is fulfilled, is to claim that he rescues God's people from their exile. Clearly he doesn't mean the Babylonian exile, since the people had already returned. He understands the prophecy to also be fulfilled at a deeper and more significant level in the rescue from the exile and separation from God due to sin.

Jesus can't mean that it's just the financially poor who are the recipients of his ministry, as financially well-off people benefit from his ministry too, ie in 8:3. Similarly, "the prisoners" cannot simply mean those literally in chains, since John the Baptist is a prisoner who dies in prison! "The poor" is a phrase used in the Old Testament to convey much more than financial need. King David describes himself as poor Psalm 34:6, 40:17, 70:5, etc. The poor are those who recognise their need for God.

## Notes for Study 5

In this section we see Jesus getting to work, having been previously identified as the Son of God, and stating his mission and purpose. Here we see Jesus demonstrating what kind of Son of God he is.

One interesting feature of this section is the repeated focus on the crowd's amazement at Jesus' teaching even immediately in response to his miracle (ie 4:35 - 36).

Notice that the evil spirit recognises Jesus in a way that the people at this point in Luke's gospel do not.

Spiritual healers in the first century would often utter long incantations and spells in their attempts to overcome sickness, etc. Jesus' approach is simply to speak, or rebuke!

## Notes for Study 6

John records a similar, though different, episode in John 21.

The Lake of Gennesaret is the Sea of Galilee.

Verse 8 is the only occasion that Luke records Peter's name as "Simon Peter."

1. What opinions have you heard people share about the reliability of the Bible, or the trustworthiness of the Christian message?

2. Can you recall being lost as a child? Or have you ever lost children?  
How did you feel?  
Where was the child when they were found?

3. What, if anything, do you know about Luke or about his gospel? Make a list.

### Read Luke 1:1 - 4

4. What do we learn about how Luke has gone about writing his gospel in these verses?

5. What do you think of Luke's stated purpose?

6. Having read Luke's own description of his approach to, and purpose in, writing, how would you respond to some of those opinions discussed in Question 1?

### Read Luke 2:41 - 52

7. Is there anything here that you find unexpected or surprising?

8. What do you notice in the crowds' and the religious teachers' responses to the boy Jesus?

9. What do we learn in this section about Jesus' understanding of his:

- Identity?

- Mission?



10. Luke (alone of the gospel authors) includes this episode in his account. What might he want us to expect of Jesus in the following pages?

11. If even Mary and Joseph, who had received messages from God's angels, struggled to understand Jesus and his purpose, how can we ensure we don't misunderstand who Jesus is and why he came?

12. How do the Scriptures give certainty and assurance today in the way that Luke intended?

## Pray

Ask God to help you continue to learn more and more of Jesus' ministry.

Give thanks for the unique ministry of Jesus, that he isn't simply another human, but someone with a unique relationship with, and access to, God.

1. Can you recall a time when you had to wait a long time for something? What was the period of waiting like?
2. What comes to mind when you hear the word "repentance"?
3. Have you ever heard a real "fire and brimstone" preacher? How did you react to their message of coming judgment?

**Read Luke 3:1 - 20**

4. What impression do you have of John the Baptist from this section?
5. Why do you think Luke lists the various political and religious leaders he does in verses 1 & 2?

6. What is John's message?

7. Which parts of John's ministry would have been most surprising to those who heard him?

8. How is the baptism that John offers, a particularly Jewish baptism?

9. What does it look like to "produce fruit in keeping with repentance" (v 8)?

10. How do John's answers to the crowd's questions apply the message that he is preaching?

11. Why do the people wonder if John might be the Messiah?

12. What does John say Jesus' ministry is going to be like?

13. In what ways is John's ministry as described here a preparation for Jesus' ministry as promised in Isaiah 40?

14. How does the reality of God's judgment shape your life?

15. What do you think repentance looks like today?

16. What do you think that your friends and family need to do to get ready for Jesus?

## Pray

Give thanks that God had been working towards salvation in Jesus long before the incarnation.

Pray that people you know will "see God's salvation."

## Luke 3:21 – 4:13 The Son Baptised and Tempted

1. Do you have any famous (or infamous!) ancestors in your family tree? Do people in your family like to mention them?

2. What is the most hungry you have ever been? What were the circumstances that led to that situation?

3. Is there a part of the Scriptures you have memorised that you like to call to mind at different times?

### Read Luke 3:21 – 22

4. Why do you think Jesus was baptised if John's baptism was "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Luke 3:3)?

5. Why do you think it's significant that Jesus was baptised at the time "when all the people were being baptised" (3:21)?

6. Why does God speak from heaven the way he does in verse 22?

7. What impact would the three unusual happenings of verse 22 have on you if you were present at Jesus' baptism?

**Read Luke 3:22 - 4:13**

8. What do you notice about Jesus' genealogy? Are there any familiar names?

9. For what reason do you think Luke has chosen to include the genealogy, and to include the detail he has?

10. What is surprising or unexpected in the account of Jesus' temptation?

11. How would you describe each of the three instances of temptation?

12. What elements of Jesus' temptation here are typical of the temptation to sin generally?

13. What do you notice about Jesus' response to temptation?

14. What does Jesus' temptation reveal about his understanding of, and relationship to, his Father?

15. How does the way Satan uses the Scriptures differ to the way Jesus does?

16. In what we have seen of Jesus so far, how is his Messiahship different to what the people of Israel may have been expecting?

17. What encouragement for us is there in this account of Jesus' temptation?

### **Pray**

Give thanks that Jesus resisted temptation, and knows the battle against temptation that we face daily.

Give thanks for the truth and promises of God contained in his Word that equips us to resist temptation.

Pray that God might enable us to stand firm in the face of temptation.



1. What is the best news you have ever heard?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Where would you describe as your "hometown"?  
What memories of feelings are associated with that place?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Think of people you know. What thoughts or opinions do they have about Jesus and his ministry?

**Read Luke 4:14 - 30**

4. From the words of Isaiah that Jesus claim are fulfilled in him, what would you say are going to be the markers of Jesus' ministry?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. If the Jews were anticipating God's great work to commence at some point in the future, what do Jesus' words say to them here?

6. Considering that Luke has told us in the immediately preceding section that Jesus has overcome in his altercation with Satan, what might be the meaning of ideas like proclaiming freedom, and setting free the oppressed (v 18)?

### Read Isaiah 61:1 – 7

7. This is the part of the scroll that Jesus reads and says is fulfilled by him. Who are “the poor,” “the captives,” “the prisoners” in this prophecy?

8. How does the meaning of the prophecy in its context shape your understanding of “the poor,” “the prisoners,” etc, in Luke 4?

9. From what you know of Jesus’ ministry, how is the prophecy of Isaiah fulfilled in Jesus?

10. Why is understanding Jesus as fulfilling Isaiah 61 an essential part of learning who Jesus is?

11. Why is the time of Jesus' ministry "the year of the Lord's favour" (v 19)?

12. Why do the people react the way they do in verse 29?

13. How is the people's response at the end of this section echoed in similar responses today when the real Jesus doesn't fit with people's expectations?

14. Since the exile that Isaiah saw coming to an end is a picture of the exile due to sin that we all face, how is Jesus' statement good news for today?

15. Think of the people in your street. How is Jesus' statement in the synagogue good news for them?

## Pray

Give thanks for Jesus' ministry of setting free those held captive by sin.

Pray for opportunities to share in the proclamation of "good news to the poor."

1. Have you ever sat under a teacher whose teaching particularly stood out for you?  
What made their efforts so effective?
2. How do you tend to react when competing priorities press in on you?
3. Can you recall what first intrigued you about Jesus or attracted you to him?

**Read Luke 4:31 - 44**

4. What does Jesus reveal about himself in each of these episodes?
5. What do you think the manner by which Jesus casts out the evil spirit and heals Simon's mother-in-law demonstrates?

6. Is the response to Jesus' miracles what you would expect in each case?

7. Despite the amazing deliverance of the demon-possessed man, what is it that repeatedly amazes the crowd in this section?

8. How do we understand this episode in the light of the programmatic statement in the previous section?

9. How does Jesus' statement about his purpose and ministry here compare to the different ideas people have about him?

10. What do we learn about the Kingdom of God in this section?

11. What do we learn about what kind of king Jesus is in this section?

12. What is the significance of Jesus leaving crowds and their acclamation at the end of this section?

13. What aspect of this account do you think the average Australian would have the most difficulty accepting or believing?

14. What have you come to learn and know about Jesus that enables you to trust in this Jesus as Son of God?

## Pray

Pray for those in our church family and others known to you who are struggling with illness. Pray for healing, restoration, and confidence in God's goodness.

Give thanks that Jesus is able to exercise the power of God over sickness and evil, and that we need have no fear of them.

1. If you got to choose your ideal job, what would it be?
2. Share your best fishing story. In less than 60 seconds!
3. Think of what we've seen of Jesus so far in Luke, or what you know of him from elsewhere in the Scriptures. What do you find most confronting about him?

**Read Luke 5:1 – 11**

4. Though the professionals fishing at the right time (night) caught nothing, still Peter trusts Jesus' command enough to obey. What does this suggest about Peter's understanding of Jesus?
5. What does the large catch of fish reveal to Peter such that he responds as he does?

6. Why does Peter think that Jesus must go away from “a sinful man”?

7. What do you notice about Jesus’ response to Peter’s outburst?

8. Why do you think Jesus commanded Peter and the others to fish before this call to ministry?

9. People sometimes imagine Jesus to be a useful helper who provides assistance from time to time. What light does this episode shed on that attitude?

10. How do we see Jesus’ ministry here fulfilling the programmatic passage in Luke 4?



11. What patterns for his ministry have we seen Jesus develop so far?

12. How is Jesus' commissioning of Peter immediately after his "sinful man" admission an encouragement to you?

13. What does it mean to "fish for people" (v 10) today?

14. There is significant cost implied in the fishermen leaving their livelihoods to follow Jesus. What makes incurring this kind of cost for following Jesus hard today?

## Pray

Pray that we might follow Jesus in the same whole-hearted way as these first disciples.

Give thanks that Jesus calls us to follow him despite our sin and failures.

Pray for the opportunities God has given you this week to "fish for people."







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