

# Through the Bible Book by Book

## New Testament

by Myer Pearlman

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### LUKE

**Theme:** Luke's Gospel gives us a historical narrative setting forth Jesus Christ as the perfect Divine Man. Luke wrote especially for the Greek people whose mission was to improve man morally, intellectually, and physically, and whose ideal was the perfect man. Just as the Jews failed to attain to salvation through the law and its ceremonies, so the Greeks failed to do so through their culture and philosophy. Education was for the Greeks what the law was for the Jews - it was their schoolmaster to bring them to Christ. Seeing their inability to save humanity by their learning, many philosophers among the Greeks saw that their only hope of salvation was the coming of a divine man. Luke, to meet the need of the Greek, sets forth Jesus as the perfect Divine Man, the representative and Saviour of humanity.

**Author:** Luke, a companion of Paul the apostle. Colossians 4:14; Philemon 24; II Timothy 4:11. Christian writers of the early centuries tell us that Luke wrote the Gospel that bears his name; that it was substantially the same which he and Paul had preached among the Greeks; and that it was produced and published among the Greek people.

**To Whom Written:** The Gospel of Luke is addressed to the Greeks in particular. Dr. Gregory tells us that it is suited to the Greeks in various ways:

1. In authorship. It is thought that Luke was a Greek. He was a highly educated man, indicated by the fact that he was a physician and by the style of his writing.
2. In plan. It is considered the most orderly history of the sayings and doings of Jesus. By careful reading we find passages that are written by a thoughtful man to a meditative and philosophic people.
3. In style. Luke's Gospel is peculiarly attractive because of its poetic eloquence. Note the songs given in the first chapter. Throughout the Gospel we find the discourses of Jesus recorded in direct contrast to Mark's Gospel which laid emphasis on the deeds of Jesus rather than His teachings.
4. Its omissions. Portions that are distinctly Jewish are omitted. Little or nothing is said about Old Testament prophecy.

#### Contents:

- I. The Introduction. 1:1-4.
- II. The Advent of the Divine Man. 1:5 to 4:13.
- III. His Ministry in Galilee. 4:14 to 9:50.
- IV. His Ministry in Perea. 9:51 to 19:28
- V. His Crucifixion and Resurrection. 19:29 to 24:53.

Luke contains many incidents and discourses found in Matthew and Mark. We shall deal, therefore with only those details that are not found in the other Gospels.

### **I. The Introduction. Chap. 1:1-4**

As was common with Greek historians, Luke begins His Gospel, with a preface. He tells us that many in his time had undertaken to write an account of Christ's ministry (v. 1). Dissatisfied evidently with these attempts, he undertakes to write an account of the Lord's life "**in order**." He states his qualifications for undertaking such a work; namely, the fact of his having received his information from eyewitnesses (v. 2), and his having a perfect knowledge of all the facts of the Lord's life and ministry from the very beginning (v. 3). He then dedicates his Gospel to one Theophilus for the purpose of confirming his faith (v. 4).

### **II. The Advent of the Divine Man. 1:5 to 4:13**

Under this heading we shall study the following details that are not found in the other Gospels:

1. The annunciation of John the Baptist's birth. 1:5-25.
2. The annunciation of Jesus' birth to Mary. 26-38.
3. Mary's visit to Elisabeth. 1:39-55.
4. The birth and childhood of John the Baptist. 1:56-80.
5. The journey to Bethlehem. 2:1-7.
6. The message of the angels. 2:8-20.
7. The circumcision of Jesus and His presentation in the temple. 2:21-39.
8. Jesus' childhood. 2:40-52.
9. The genealogy of Jesus. 3:23-38.

Luke opens his narrative with an event not found in other Gospels - the annunciation of the birth of John the Baptist. His father, who was a priest, was performing his ministry in the temple, which at that particular time was the offering up of incense. The office of incensing was held so honorable that no one was allowed to perform it twice, since it brought the officiating priest nearer the Divine presence in the Holy of Holies than any other priestly act.

The rising cloud of incense was a symbol of Israel's prayers arising to God. While engaged in this ministry an angel appeared and announced the coming birth of a son. It should be noted that this annunciation was the first recorded Divine message since the time of the prophet Malachi (about 400 B. C).. Whom did Malachi's last message mention? Malachi 4:5. Whom did the angel mention in his message? Luke 1:17. Then follows the annunciation to Mary. Note that Matthew records the annunciation to Joseph. Matthew gives the story from Joseph's viewpoint; Luke, from Mary's. The fact that Luke is telling the story from Mary's viewpoint, furnishes us with a good reason for believing that the genealogy given by Luke is that of Mary.

Mary, probably at the suggestion of the angel (1:36) visits her cousin Elisabeth. In response to her salutation, she gives utterance to that beautiful song commonly known as the "Magnificat" (1:46-55). This song is based on Old Testament scriptures (See Genesis 30:13 and I Samuel 2:1-10).

John the Baptist is born. Contrary to the usual custom among the Jews, he is not named after a dead relative.

His name means “*The Lord is gracious*” - an appropriate name for the forerunner of the Lord of grace. Zacharias’ tongue is loosened, and, filled with the Spirit of God, he praises God in that song commonly known as the “*Benedictus*” (1:68-79).

Matthew records the simple fact that Christ was born at Bethlehem. Luke goes into details, and records the circumstances that led to Joseph and Mary’s taking the journey to that town; namely, a Roman registration for taxing, which required the presence of each person in his native town.

- Who preached the first Gospel message (2:10-12)?
- Who were the first evangelists (2:15-17)?

Paul tells us in Galatians 4:4 that God’s Son was made “**under the law;**” i.e., He fulfilled its requirements. So we see His parents in Luke 2:21-24 fulfilling the law in regard to Him in the performance of two ceremonies - that of circumcision and presentation to the Lord. By the former, He became a member of the Jewish nation, and by the latter Jehovah’s claim upon Him as the first-born of the family was recognized. (See Exodus 13:2-15; 34:19).

Luke is the only Evangelist who records any incident of Jesus’ childhood. He does so in order to emphasize His humanity - to set Him forth as the “**Seed of the woman.**” (Genesis 3:15). He wishes to show that though Jesus was the Son of God, He grew in a natural way (2:40, 52). He records Jesus’ visit to Jerusalem in order to show that Jesus, from childhood, had a consciousness of His Divine mission (2:49). Luke, like Matthew, records a genealogy of Jesus. But on examination it will be seen that they differ. Matthew traces Jesus’ descent through David’s son Solomon (Matthew 1:6); Luke, through David’s son Nathan (Luke 3:31). The simple explanation is that the one in Matthew is that of Joseph; that in Luke, of Mary.

Matthew shows that Jesus had the legal right to the throne of David; this makes Him David’s heir. But since the Messiah must be the seed of David according to the flesh, and since Jesus’ was not Joseph’s real son it follows that His natural right to the throne must be proved. Since it is Luke’s purpose to emphasize the humanity of Christ - to set Him forth as the Seed of woman, and since He describes the birth of Christ from Mary’s viewpoint, we conclude that the genealogy given in Luke is that of Mary, given to prove that Jesus had the natural right to David’s throne by being born of a virgin of the house of David. It may be objected that Luke 3:23 shows Joseph to be the son of Heli and that Mary is not mentioned. This may be explained by the fact that among the Jews the descent was not reckoned through the wife, so that Joseph, though really the son-in-law of Heli, is reckoned as his son.

### **III. His Ministry in Galilee. Chaps. 4:14 to 9:50**

This section contains the following details peculiar to Luke:

1. The first rejection at Nazareth. 4:14-30.
2. The miraculous draught of fishes. 5:1-11.
3. The raising of the widow’s son. 7:11-18.
4. The anointing of Jesus by a sinful woman. 7:36-50.
5. The women who ministered to the Lord. 8:1-3.
6. Zeal without knowledge rebuked. 9:49, 50.

Chapter 4:14-32 records Jesus' first rejection at Nazareth.

After the successful beginning of His ministry (Matthew 4:23-25), He returns to His native town. Sabbath finds Him attending the synagogue. After the reading of the Scriptures it was the custom to call upon some teacher or preacher, if one were present, to deliver a message. (Compare Acts 13:15). The leader, having heard of Jesus' ministry, calls Him to the pulpit.

Taking as His text Isaiah 61:1, our Lord sits down (after the manner of oriental teachers) and preaches that text as being fulfilled in Him. The people at first are moved by His gracious words, but later stumbled over the fact that He was only the Son of Joseph.

How could He, the son of a carpenter, be the fulfillment of the Scriptures? Jesus reminds them that a prophet is usually not accepted in his own country and illustrates this by citing two Old Testament incidents where, God's prophets, unappreciated in general by Israel, were received by the Gentiles. The action of the people shows that they understood this as an implied reference to their rejection and the Gentiles' reception.

Luke supplements Matthew's account of the calling of the first disciples (Matthew 4:17-22) by recording a miracle in that connection - namely the miraculous draught of fishes. Such a revelation of Christ's power brings Peter to his knees in deep conviction of his own sinfulness. This miracle may be considered as typical of Peter's great draught on the day of Pentecost. (Compare Luke 5:10; Acts 2:41).

A funeral at Nain gives the Lord an opportunity to reveal Himself as the One who "**shall wipe away all tears.**" Revelation 21:4.

While Jesus was seated in the house of a Pharisee, a woman who had been a great sinner, comes and anoints Him. The Pharisee, who considered the touch of such a woman defiling, is surprised. Jesus, in the parable of the Two Debtors, teaches Simon that the attentions of this woman were bestowed upon Him in gratitude for sins forgiven. Simon, He said, had not given Him these attentions. This statement is a thrust at the self-righteous Pharisee for it implies that he had not felt the burden of sin as the woman had, and therefore felt no gratitude.

In chapter 8:1-3, Luke gives us an insight into the ministry of women in relation to the Lord. He mentions some who helped to support Him.

Our Lord teaches His disciples a lesson in tolerance (9:49,50). We here see the other side of the "**beloved disciple's**" character. Though loving and gentle, he was at the same time zealous, and had a hatred for anything he believed to be wrong.

### **His Ministry in Perea. 9:51 to 19:28**

In this section we notice the following details peculiar to Luke:

1. Jesus' rejection by the Samaritans. 9:51-56.
2. The sending forth of the Seventy. 10:1-24.
3. The Good Samaritan. 10:25-37.
4. Martha and Mary. 10:38-42.
5. The Parable of the Rich Fool. 12:13-21.

6. A lesson on repentance. 13:1-10.
7. The healing of the woman with an infirmity. 13:11-17.
8. Discourse On the strait gate. 13:23-30.
9. Herod's warning. 13:31-35.
10. Healing of the man with dropsy. 14:1-6.
11. True hospitality, and the parable of the Great Supper. 14:12-24.
12. Discourse on counting the cost. 14:25-35.
13. Parables of grace and warning. Chs. 15, 16.
14. A lesson on faith. 17:1-10.
15. The ten lepers. 17:11-19.
16. Parables of the Unjust Judge and of the Pharisee and the Publican. 18:1-14.
17. The conversion of Zaccheus. 19:1-10.
18. Parable of the Talents. 19:11-28.

The prejudice of the Samaritans toward the Jews is seen in their refusal to receive Jesus because His face was set towards Jerusalem. John and James, the "**Sons of Thunder**" (Mark 3:17), in an overzealous spirit, wish to emulate Elijah's example in calling down fire from Heaven. This zeal without knowledge receives a severe rebuke from the Master. Besides sending forth twelve apostles, Jesus sent forth a large party of seventy disciples. Such a large number was necessary because the time for the Lord's departure was at hand, and the large territory of Perea was yet unevangelized. Their instructions are similar to those of the Twelve.

Jesus takes advantage of a question put to Him by a Jewish lawyer to strike a blow at Jewish prejudice. In answer to the man's question, Who is my neighbor? Jesus utters the parable of the Good Samaritan, choosing as an example of the perfect neighbor, one of a race hated by the Jews. The lesson contained in the parable is that anybody in need, be he Jew or Gentile, is our neighbor.

Chapter 10:38-42 gives a little insight into the social life of Jesus, describing two intimate friends of His - Martha and Mary. It is interesting to note here how much Luke emphasizes the ministry of women in his Gospel. (See also Luke 1:26-55; 2:36; 8:1-3).

In the parable of the Rich Fool the Lord sounds out a warning against covetousness. Jesus is referred to certain calamities which had befallen the Galileans, the inference drawn from these calamities being that they were the result of sin on the part of the people (13:1-10). Our Lord taught His informants that exceptional suffering was not necessarily the result of exceptional sin, and that they, if they did not repent, would perish. To show the longsuffering of God toward Israel and toward sinners in general, He utters the parable of the Barren Fig Tree. Jesus' method of dealing with merely speculative questions is seen in 13:23-30. The disciples raise the question as to the number of those who will be saved. Instead of giving a direct answer Jesus warns them to see to it that they themselves were found in the narrow way that leads to life everlasting.

Herod, ruler of Galilee and Perea, fearing that the immense crowds that Jesus was drawing might cause a disturbance in his territory, employs some Pharisees to warn Jesus to leave his dominions. Seeing through the scheme of the "Fox," Jesus assures him that he has nothing to fear from Him since He is working for the relief of humanity. Herod need not seek to kill Him; Jerusalem, "the prophet's slaughter-house" will do that. At the remembrance of Jerusalem, Christ breaks forth into tears, and prophesies its destruction (13:31-35).

Our Lord, teaching a lesson On true hospitality, counsels His hearers to invite to their feast the poor and needy, for which acts of charity, they would be rewarded at the resurrection of the just (14:12-14). On hearing of that resurrection, one of the company breaks forth into an exclamation of joy at the happy prospect of the coming of God's kingdom (v. 15). Jesus takes advantage of this utterance to teach, that blessed as that event will be, many will refuse the invitation to the Great Supper (vss. 16-24).

Verses 25-35 of chapter 14 show how Jesus treated prospective disciples. He did not promise them a life of ease, but required the most severe self-denial. His measure of a disciple was the cross. In answer to the taunt of the Pharisees charging Him with consorting with sinners, Jesus utters the parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Prodigal Son, to teach the love of God toward sinners (Chap. 15). Notice that all these parables contain the same line of thought; namely, loss, restoration, and joy.

Chapter 16 contains the parables of the Unjust Steward, and the incident of the Rich Man and Lazarus. The former is intended to teach Christians foresight in relation to money matters. A dishonest steward is about to be dismissed from his position.

Unwilling to work and ashamed to beg, he resolves to use his master's money in such a way that it will ensure him a happy future. The application is as follows: Christians are stewards; i.e., they are entrusted with their Master's property. The time is coming when their stewardship will cease (through death). Because of this, they should so Use their money on earth (by supporting missions, etc.), that when they reach heaven, they may enjoy an eternal interest on their investments. (Compare Luke 16:9 and I Timothy 6:17, 18). The incident of the Rich Man and Lazarus shows the fate of those who, unmindful of the sufferings of their neighbor, live entirely for self.

An injunction to forgiveness on the part of Christ (17:1-4) leads the disciples to desire a deeper spiritual experience - namely, an increase of faith (v. 5). They have in mind the quantity of faith; Jesus emphasizes its quality, showing the efficacy of faith as small as a mustard seed. Then He proceeds to teach them that though they might have the faith that would pluck up sycamine trees, they were not to glory in it, but rather consider themselves unprofitable servants (v. 10); for to believe God is only their duty.

Luke's Gospel is the Gospel of humanity. He emphasizes in his choice of parables, God's love for all mankind.

It is interesting to note how he stresses Jesus' love for the Samaritans - a people hated and despised by the Jews. (See 9:52-56; 10:25-37). In the incident of the healing of the ten lepers (17:11-19), he uses the ingratitude of the Jewish lepers as a dark background for the faith and thankfulness of one Samaritan (vv. 17, 18).

To teach importunity in prayer, Jesus utters the parable of the Unjust Judge. The lesson is:

If an unjust judge will be moved by the importunity of a woman in whom he feels no interest how much more will God, the righteous judge, respond to the prayers of those whom He loves. The parable of the Pharisee and the Publican is a fine illustration of Romans 3:19-21.

Chapter 19:1-10 records the conversion of a member of that despised class - the publicans.

The publicans were Jewish tax-gatherers in the employ of the Roman government. Because of their serving the Jews' oppressors, and the fact that they were usually dishonest, they were hated by the people. Zaccheus manifested the genuineness of his conversion by an offer of complete restitution of all he acquired by dishonest means. Is the parable of the Talents (19:11-28) the same as that parable found in Matthew 25: 14-30? Compare them.

### V. His Crucifixion and Resurrection. Chaps. 19:29 to 24:53

We shall notice here the following details peculiar to Luke:

1. Christ's weeping over Jerusalem. 19:41-44.
2. Strife among the disciples for chief positions. 22:24-30.
3. Warning to Peter. 22:31-34.
4. Instructions to disciples. 22:35-38.
5. Jesus before Herod. 23:8-12.
6. The lamentation of the women of Jerusalem. 23:27-31.
7. The repentant thief. 23:39-43.
8. The walk to Emmaus. 24:13-35.
9. The command to tarry. 24:49.

With what feelings does the Deity pronounce judgment? Our Lord's weeping over Jerusalem will answer the question. He prophesies its destruction by the Romans and attributes its coming calamities to spiritual ignorance - "**Because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.**"

In spite of their teaching by the Lord, the disciples were still dull of understanding. The fact of their striving among themselves for the greatest position in the kingdom shows that they had not clearly apprehended the true nature of that kingdom. The thought of a temporal kingdom still occupied their minds. Jesus takes advantage of this to bring home a lesson in humility.

Chapter 22:31-32 gives us a glimpse behind the scenes and shows us the cause of Peter's great fall. His over-confidence had made it necessary for God to permit Satan to sift him. (Compare Satan's temptation of Job). We also learn why Peter rose again after his fall - Christ prayed for him.

We offer a paraphrase of the words found in 22:35-38. Jesus as much as says to the disciples, "When you went forth the first time, I was popular with the people, and consequently, you, My representatives lacked nothing. But conditions have changed. The nation is against Me; I am about to be crucified - to be '**reckoned among the transgressors.**' Therefore you need not expect to be received kindly by the people. For this reason, provide yourselves with purse and scrip. As symbolical of the spiritual warfare you are about to be engaged in, provide yourselves with swords,"

Pontius Pilate, having examined Jesus, and having learned that He is of Galilee, sends Him to Herod, the ruler of that province. Herod has heard of Jesus' miracles and is anxious to witness His power. He treats Him as He would treat a magician whose tricks he wished to witness. Jesus has nothing to say to this cruel ruler and maintains a dignified silence. Whereupon Herod and his soldiers mock and send Him back to Pilate.

On His way to the cross, Jesus is met by the women of Jerusalem who bewail Him. He tells them that He does not ask for their pity; rather, they are the ones to be pitied. For He asks them, if the innocent suffer, as He is about to, what will happen to the guilty (23:31)?

Matthew tells that both thieves, crucified with Christ, railed on Him. Luke adds one more detail and tells us that one of these repented. They offer a type of two classes of humanity in relation to Christ. Both were sinners, both condemned by the law, both paying the penalty of the law, and both were without hope, yet one is saved and the other lost. The destiny of these men was decided by their attitude to the innocent One hanging on the cross.

In chapter 24:13-35, we get an insight into the feelings of the disciples before the resurrection of Christ. The death of their Master had proved a great blow to them. Though He had prophesied His resurrection, they had not grasped fully the truth that the Messiah may first suffer and then rise again, so influenced were they by the Jewish idea that the coming of the Messiah could be nothing but a glorious one. In an exposition of the Old Testament that causes the hearts of the two disciples to burn, Jesus, who at first concealed His identity from them, showed them how it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer before entering into His glory.

Luke concludes his Gospel with the record of Jesus' command to the disciples to tarry, and His ascension. The record of events repeated in the first chapter of the book of Acts, is written by the same Author.

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