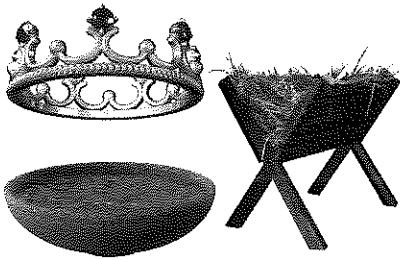


Luke: Jesus, the Son of Man



Topic

Gospel of Luke

Theme

The Gospel of Luke presents Christ as the perfect Son of Man Who provided salvation for all.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will seek to witness according to the truth that the gospel is for all.

Materials

- Resources 1, 2, and 6

Scripture Focus

Luke

Summary

This lesson is an overview of Luke. It will introduce Luke the writer and will trace his presentation of Christ as the perfect Son of Man Who came to be the Savior of both Jews and Gentiles. Special emphasis will be given to our response to Luke's presentation of Christ.

Outline

I. Authorship of Luke

- A. Luke, the minister
- B. Luke, the writer

II. Luke's Purposes

- A. Present Jesus as the perfect Son of Man
- B. Communicate that Jesus is the Savior of all
 - 1. Announcement by the angels
 - 2. Song of Simeon
 - 3. Grace for Gentiles

Memory Verse

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

GETTING STARTED

Life with a Perfect Person

Suppose you had a perfect family member who was perfectly humble about his perfection.

ASK: What might be the three biggest challenges of living with a perfect family member? (Q1)

ASK: How do you think you would respond to living with a perfect person? (Q2)

How did the world respond when Jesus lived before them as a perfect Man? Eventually they crucified Him! Luke emphasized Jesus' perfect humanity in his Gospel. As the perfect God-Man, Jesus was qualified to be the Savior of the world. Luke made sure his readers understood that Jesus came to seek and save all people regardless of their ethnicity or social status.

Perfection Test

Ask the learners to give themselves ten points for every statement you read that is a true reflection of their lives. Any student with one hundred points should be further evaluated to see if he is perfect!

- I have never been covetous.
- I have never taken something, including time, that belonged to someone else.
- I have never talked about someone behind his back.
- I have always shown love to those I know and meet.
- I have never worried about anything.
- I have always told the truth.
- I have never disobeyed a parent or person in authority, including highway patrolmen.
- I have always given my best effort on the job.
- I have never gotten mad and blown up at someone.
- I have always exercised patience.

ASK: Did you score any points? Why not?

ASK: Do you know anyone who would get a good score on such an evaluation?

It is hard to even imagine being a perfect person. Luke presented Jesus as the perfect God-Man. As a perfect person, Jesus was qualified to be the Savior of the world. Luke made sure his readers understood that Jesus came to seek and save all people regardless of their ethnicity or social status.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

I. Authorship of Luke

While the third Gospel is anonymous, the testimony of the early church writers is that Luke, the beloved physician and companion of Paul, was the writer. This testimony is readily accepted by scholars.

A. Luke, the minister

Though Luke's nationality is not certain, it is possible he was a Gentile. In *Colossians 4*, Paul specifically mentions all the Jews who had been a comfort to him (4:10, 11) and then mentions Luke later (4:14). This would mean that Luke was the only New Testament writer who was not a Jew. But this evidence is by no means definitive. The Bible nowhere states that Luke was either Gentile or Jewish.

Luke was Paul's companion on part of Paul's second and third missionary journeys. Luke was also along on Paul's journey to Rome. Luke's missionary experience and interaction with Paul must have helped form his understanding of the gospel. He saw firsthand the power and spread of the gospel. He witnessed the changed lives.

While we can't know for sure when Luke wrote his Gospel, it may very well have been after the third missionary journey while Paul was under arrest in Cæsarea. It is possible Luke didn't finish it until he arrived with Paul in Rome. Whenever Luke wrote, we can conclude that his experiences as a missionary most likely influenced his Gospel as he wrote under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Luke entered the scene in *Acts* during the second missionary journey after Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia asking for help (*Acts 16:9, 10*). Macedonia was predominantly Roman. Philippi, the chief city of the province, was a Roman colony making it like a little Rome. The Romans used the city to influence the province. And the absence of a synagogue in the city indicates that few Jews lived there.

READ: *Acts 16:9, 10. ASK:* What did God communicate about the gospel by calling the missionaries to a place like Macedonia? (Q3) *The gospel is for everyone. God was as concerned about reaching the Romans as He was about reaching the Jews.*

While we don't know where Luke was when Paul and Silas were arrested for witnessing in Philippi, we can be confident that Luke was well aware of what went on, and he would have heard a report of the salvation decisions. The missionaries' work in Philippi reached a variety of Gentiles.

READ: *Acts 16:13–18, 25–32. ASK:* What types of people did the gospel reach in Philippi? (Q4) *It reached Gentiles, women, the rich, the poor, and the roughest of men.*

Luke was present when Paul made his way back to Jerusalem and gave a detailed report about all that God had done among the Gentiles during the third

Lydia's trade as a seller of purple would have most likely made her rich. The purple dye was difficult to attain, so purple garments brought a premium price.

missionary journey (21:19). As a result of the report, Luke would have been convinced that the gospel is far-reaching.

ASK: How else might Luke's travels throughout the Roman Empire have affected his outlook on the gospel and the ministry of Christ? (Q5) *He would have been convinced beyond a doubt that Christ indeed came to seek and save the lost regardless of their ethnicity or background.*

B. Luke, the writer

Fulfilled is a better translation of the phrase *most surely believed* (Luke 1:1). This translation communicates that God's purpose was accomplished through Christ.

Luke was a careful researcher. He consulted other accounts about Christ (Luke 1:1). The Gospels of Matthew and Mark could be two of the accounts Luke consulted. We do know that the accounts he used were written by *eyewitnesses* and *ministers of the word* (1:2). *Word* refers to the message of the Gospel. Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, Luke wrote an orderly account of *all things from the very first* (1:3), or the beginning of Jesus' ministry. So he wrote what the eyewitnesses observed and reported about Christ. Luke said he had *perfect understanding* and that he wrote the account *in order*. *Understanding* in the original language means *to trace carefully*. *Perfect* conveys the idea of *accurate*. *In order* communicates that idea that Luke was systematic in his arranging of the events he recorded. Luke's stated goal of his careful research and recording was so a man named *Theophilus* could be confident of what he had already learned about Christ's words and deeds (1:4). We don't know anything more about Theophilus other than his name means *lover of God*. Perhaps he was a new believer wanting to know more about Christ. Or maybe he was an unbeliever who was coming close to putting his faith in Christ. Either way, the Gospel of Luke, along with the book of Acts (Acts 1:1), would have helped him with his lack of understanding.

ASK: While Luke's testimony about how careful he was in writing his Gospel is important, what ultimately gives you confidence in the accuracy of his Gospel? (Q6) *The work of the Holy Spirit in inspiring the Gospel.*

God-fearers were a class of Gentile sympathizers to Judaism in diaspora Hellenistic Judaism. They were not proselytes in that they did not fully embrace the Jewish law. They were monotheists who came from a polytheistic background. Lydia was a God-fearer who became a believer through the ministry of Paul (Acts 16:14).

Besides Theophilus, Luke seems to have written for a Gentile audience in general, and new Gentile believers specifically. For instance, He used the context of world politics as the setting for Christ, he wrote as if the reader would not have been too familiar with the places and geography of Israel, and he quoted some from the Septuagint, a Greek translation of what is now our Old Testament. Furthermore, the number of appearances of God-fearers in both Luke and Acts might be a clue that Luke had them in mind as he wrote.

II. Luke's Purposes

Many Gentiles in Luke's day had left the traditional gods to try to find hope and security in mystery religions of the east. Luke's message of the Son of Man Who had actually lived on earth and showed love for people would have been intriguing to them. And the conviction that Luke wrote with would have been obvious to his readers. He communicated that his message was not fanciful but real.

RESOURCE: Display resource 2 to review the three portraits of Christ in the synoptic Gospels.

A. Present Jesus as the Perfect God-Man

As presented in the first lesson, Matthew traced Jesus' genealogy back to Abraham to emphasize Jesus' identification with the Jewish people. Luke, on the other hand, carried Jesus' genealogy back to Adam to emphasize that Jesus identified with the entire human race (Luke 3:23–38). Luke's apparent use of Mary's line of descendants, as opposed to Joseph's line, directly connects Jesus with humanity. That emphasis is apparent in the rest of the Gospel.

Christ as the Son of Man is perhaps the portrait of Him that we can most readily understand with our finite minds. For as the Spirit of God reveals Him to us, He also relates Him to us in the realm of our humanity. Our minds try their best to grasp His eternal deity, His absolute sovereignty, His humbling, His King of kings status; but while we believe those things, we have little to go on but faith. However, in the realm of the revelation of Him as Son of Man, we see Him in activities and circumstances to which we can relate and we feel His compassion and care for us.

Luke's attention to the birth of Christ is unmatched in any of the other Gospels. The reader is given the opportunity to consider Jesus as a baby and perhaps even imagine being able to hold Him. Our experience with babies helps us understand some of what it was like for Mary and Joseph. Jesus laid in their arms as they felt love for Him and began to get to know Him.

READ: Luke 2:4–7. **ASK:** What comes to your mind as you contemplate Jesus' birth? (Q7)

Luke includes the account of Jesus in the temple as a boy (2:41–52). He amazed the scholars with His knowledge and understanding, an early sign that Jesus is no ordinary man.

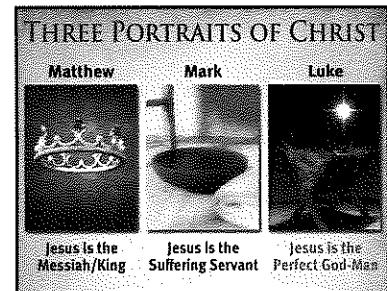
Luke also includes instances of Jesus doing activities like praying (5:16), eating with people (5:29; 7:36), and compassionately interrupting a funeral (7:11–15). All of these relate the humanity of Christ.

Several parables are recounted in Luke that are not in any of the other Gospels. Far from being impractical or just nice stories, they stress areas of life that translate to today. The parable of the Good Samaritan, for instance, illustrates what it means to love one's neighbor (10:25–37). The parables of the lost coin, the lost sheep, and the Prodigal Son show Christ's love for perishing sinners (15:1–32), a love that should be emulated by believers today.

As Jesus entered Jerusalem He wept over the city knowing the trouble that would come to the city because of their rejection of Him (19:41–44). Luke is the only writer to include this point. It again shows Jesus' humanity and helps us make a connection with Him.

Jesus' humanity is perhaps seen most notably in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night He was betrayed and arrested.

READ: Luke 22:39–43. **ASK:** How do you see the humanity of Christ in this



passage? (Q8) He feels the heavy weight of the suffering He is about to endure on the cross. He benefits from the angels who come to strengthen Him physically.

READ: Luke 22:44. **ASK:** How do we know that Jesus' anticipation of the cross was something that deeply affected His body? (Q9) *His sweat was mingled with blood, a sign of extreme physical stress.*

Jesus was not spared in any way the physical pain and suffering of the cross. He met the cross as fully human, yet without sin.

Luke recorded Pilate's announcements of Jesus' innocence after hearing all the charges against Jesus (Luke 23:4, 14, 15, 22). Those announcements didn't make Jesus innocent, they simply recognized what was already true of Jesus. As Christ hung on the cross, the centurion concluded that Jesus is a *righteous man* (23:47).

After Jesus' resurrection, Luke recounted Jesus' appearance to His disciples. Luke emphasized Jesus' humanity by telling how Jesus told the doubting disciples to handle His body, to touch His scars, and to discover for themselves that He indeed has human flesh. He even went so far as to ask them to bring Him some food so He could eat it and show that His presence with them was physical and that His resurrection was for real (24:36–43).

B. Communicate that Jesus is the Savior of all

Luke, a firsthand witness of the power of the gospel to change lives, wrote his Gospel to present Jesus as the Son of Man and Savior for everyone.

1. Announcement by the angels

Luke is the only writer to record what the angels announced to the shepherds as the shepherds watched their flocks in the fields the night of Christ's birth. The angels gave a global announcement of peace (2:14). *Peace* in this context is more than an absence of conflict. It means *soundness* and conveys the idea of being *complete*. It is essentially a reference to the salvation that comes through Christ.

The fact that the announcement came to shepherds would have been important to Luke. Shepherds were outcasts in Israel. No one respected them. Instead the people considered them unclean because of their occupation.

READ: Luke 2:8–11, 16, 17. **ASK:** What must the shepherds have concluded about the Savior as a result of being chosen by God to receive and proclaim the announcement of Jesus' birth? (Q10) *That He must be the Savior of all men if God would bother to make such an announcement to men as lowly as them.*

The angels' appearance to the shepherds was obviously orchestrated by God on purpose. He wanted the world to know that His Son was to be Savior of even the lowly shepherds.

READ: Luke 2:18. **ASK:** What did God communicate to the people of Israel by sending shepherds to announce the birth of Jesus? (Q11) *That He did not share their prejudices and that He was sending a Savior for all people.*

John also records evidence of Jesus' post-resurrection humanity (John 20:24–31). The emphasis in John's Gospel is on the evidence that Jesus is the Son of God (20:30, 31).

2. Song of Simeon

The song of Simeon reflects Luke's theme that Jesus the Son of Man is the Savior of all people. God had revealed to Simeon that he would not die before he saw the *Lord's Christ* (2:26). When Simeon saw the baby, he took Him in his arms and sang to the Lord.

READ: Luke 2:28–32. **ASK:** What did Simeon say that emphasized Jesus was to be the Savior of all? (Q12) *He said he saw God's salvation which would be before the face of all people and would be a light to lighten the Gentiles.*

God's salvation of the Gentiles was not an afterthought or a plan B. From the beginning God intended for Jesus to be the Savior of all. The Gentiles were in darkness in that they were lost in their sins and had no hope. Jesus was the light to illuminate the way of salvation. Mary and Joseph marveled at Simeon's song (2:33). Perhaps they had not yet realized Jesus' impact would be worldwide.

3. Salvation of Gentiles

In showing that Jesus, the perfect Son of Man, is the Savior for all, Luke highlighted Jesus' teaching about reaching Gentiles. In one instance Jesus taught in the synagogue of Nazareth from the book of Isaiah (Luke 4:16–20). He elaborated on the text by using Old Testament illustrations of Gentiles who experienced God's grace (Luke 4:21–30). The first Gentile was the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:8–16). She was very poor. The second was Naaman, the prestigious commander of the Syrian army (2 Kings 5:1–19). God reached out to these two Gentiles of very different backgrounds while His people for the most part rejected Him.

READ: Luke 4:21–30. **ASK:** What did the Jews try to do to Jesus after He taught them that God extends His grace to Gentiles? (Q13) *They tried to throw Him off a cliff.*

ASK: What did the Jews of Nazareth essentially reveal about the type of Messiah they were looking for? (Q14) *They were looking for a deliverer who would free them from the Romans and reestablish Jewish rule.*

Obviously Jesus' teaching about God extending grace to Gentiles was not a popular message among the Jews.

Jesus further demonstrated God's interest in Gentiles by directly interacting with Gentile individuals who put their faith in Him. Luke recorded such an incident about a centurion (7:1–10).

READ: Luke 7:1–10. **ASK:** How did the centurion's faith stack up with the faith of those in Israel? (Q15) *Jesus said the centurion's faith was greater than the faith He witnessed in Israel.*

In Matthew's account of the centurion's servant, the writer adds Jesus' comments about the coming Kingdom (Matt. 8:5–13). Luke added the same teaching later in his Gospel (Luke 13:29). The point is that Christ's future Kingdom will include Gentiles from all over the world while some Jews will be excluded because of their unbelief (13:27–29).

Christ will reign on earth for one thousand years in fulfillment of God's covenant with the Jews. Gentiles, represented by church age believers, will be part of Christ's Kingdom, but God's covenant is not with the church. The church simply benefits from God's covenant with Israel.

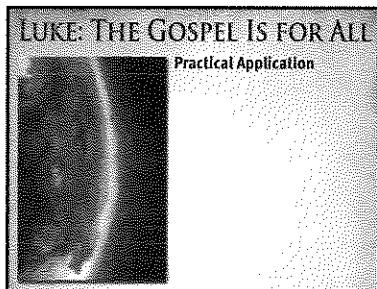
Luke again picked up Jesus' theme of the inclusion of Gentiles in His Kingdom by telling a parable about a great supper (14:15–24). The great supper symbolized Christ's Kingdom. The Jews who reject Christ are represented by the guests who were invited to the great supper but made excuses for not going (14:18–20). The Jews that the Jewish elite considered inferior are represented by the poor and the lame who respond to the invitation. The Gentiles are those whom the servant found by going to the *highways and hedges* (14:23). Some Gentiles respond positively to the offer to attend the great supper.

Luke ends his Gospel with Jesus' explanation of His death. He said He had to die and rise again so that *repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations* (24:47). Jesus then identified His disciples as those who would be His witnesses (24:48). Luke follows up his Gospel with the book of Acts, which tells how the disciples and others took the gospel to the ends of the earth.

MAKING IT PERSONAL

Gospel for All People

ASK: Would others conclude from your life that the gospel is for all people? Explain. (Q16)



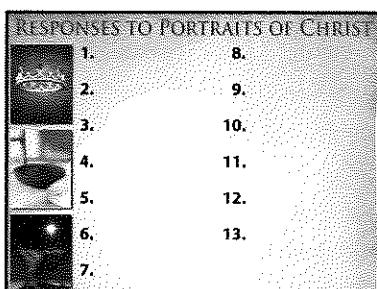
RESOURCE: Display resource 6. **ASK:** If we truly believe the gospel is for all, what evidence should there be in our lives? (Q17) *We pray for opportunities to witness; we become comfortable at sharing the gospel; we take time to get to know people; we are informed about our missionaries and pray for their needs.*

Challenge your learners to consider whether there is evidence in their life that they truly believe the gospel is for all.

Reaching the Unreached

ASK: Are there persons or people groups you have neglected sharing the gospel with? Explain. (Q18)

ASK: What could you or your church do to reach those people groups? (Q19)



Summary and Memory Verse

RESOURCE: Display resource 1. Add a summary statement for lesson 4 or use the following: Share the gospel with all.

Encourage learners to memorize Luke 19:10. Give them an opportunity to say the verses in class next week.