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## BIBLICAL TRAINING CENTER

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### Gospel of Luke

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## Overview

### 1. Distinctives

- a. The main theme is that Jesus is **Savior of all people**—the **poor, outsiders, 'sinners,' Samaritans** and **Gentiles**. There's a strong emphasis on the universality of the Gospel.

| Luke 19:10 – “For the Son of Man came **to seek and to save the lost.**”

- b. The term '**salvation**' is a favorite theme in Luke (1:19, 69, 71, 77; 2:10; 3:18; 4:18, 43; 7:22; 8:1; 9:6; 16:16; 19:9; 20:1). The word doesn't even appear in Matthew or Mark!
- c. **Luke** and **Acts** are a literary **unit**. It's appropriate to speak of the two books as 'Luke-Acts' (as a single book).
- d. Luke writes to a **non-Jewish** audience.
  - Luke explains the **location of places** in Israel (8:26; 21:37; 23:51; 24:13).
  - He traced Jesus' genealogy back to **Adam** (father of all, Lk. 3:23-38).
- e. Unlike Matthew, Luke rarely mentions that Jesus was **fulfilling prophecy**. And few Old Testament references are given.
- f. Luke wants us to know he was extremely **careful to document** Jesus' life, death and resurrection **accurately**. He had a 'historiographic interest.' We'll see this below.
- g. Luke emphasized the ministry of the **Holy Spirit**. John the Baptist, Mary, Elizabeth, Zacharias, Simeon, and Jesus were filled with the power of the Spirit to accomplish their ministries (1:15, 35, 41, 67; 2:25-26; 4:1; 24:49).

- h. Special emphasis is placed on **women**. Luke mentions women 43 times (13 are not mentioned in the other gospels). Some examples of women mentioned are Elizabeth, Mary, Martha and Mary, Mary Magdalene, Anna, Joanna, and Susanna.<sup>1</sup> No other gospel puts so much emphasis on the **role that women played in Jesus' ministry** (Lk. 8:3).
- i. Luke stresses Jesus' **journey to Jerusalem** (starting in chapter 9). The reader frequently reads that Jesus "set his face to go to Jerusalem." (9:51, 53; 13:22, 33; 15:31; 17:11; 19:11, 28, 37, 41, 45)
- j. **Key words and phrases** reveal Luke's emphasis on **salvation**:  
*sin/sinner/sinful* (18×), *glad tidings / good news* (10×), *grace* (8×), *salvation* (6×), *save* (19×), *Savior* (2×).<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Author

- a. There is **near universal agreement** that Luke and Acts were written by the **same author**. They share a **common style and theology**. Both are addressed to **Theophilus** (Lk. 1:3; Acts 1:1).<sup>3</sup>

### Acts 1:1–2 – Jesus Taken Up Into Heaven

1 In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach <sup>2</sup>until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.

- b. Church history says **Luke** was the author of Luke-Acts.
- The early Fathers agree that Luke wrote it. This includes Irenaeus (AD 130), Tertullian (AD 155-220), Clement of Alexandria (AD 150-215), Origen (AD 184-253) and Eusebius (AD 263-339).<sup>4</sup>
  - Irenaeus (writing AD 180) said:

“**Luke** ... always preached in company with **Paul**, and is called by him ‘the

<sup>1</sup> Norman L. Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2014), 78.

<sup>2</sup> Geisler, *A Popular Survey*, 78.

<sup>3</sup> Mark L. Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus: A Survey of Jesus and the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 289.

<sup>4</sup> Geisler, *A Popular Survey*, 76, 77.

beloved,' and with him performed the work of an evangelist, and **was entrusted to hand down to us a Gospel...**"<sup>5</sup>

- c. The **earliest manuscripts** name Luke as the author.
- d. Luke was...
  - A **physician** (Col. 4:14).
  - Likely a **Gentile** since not listed in Colossians 4:10-14.
  - A **companion of Paul** (2 Tim. 4:11; Philemon 24). This can be seen from the **'we passages'** in Acts (Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16). In fact, scholars have seen so much of Paul's teaching in Luke's gospel that they've called it the **Gospel of Paul**.<sup>6</sup>

### 3. Date

- a. Luke was written in AD **60** during Paul's imprisonment at Caesarea (Acts 23:31–35).<sup>7</sup> Here are some reasons for this date:
  - Like Matthew and Mark, it must have been written before AD 70 because it implies that the **temple was still standing** (Lk. 21:5-38). The temple was destroyed in AD 70.
  - **Scholars date Acts to AD 61/62**. Luke starts Acts saying he had already written his gospel (Acts 1:1).
  - **Paul died in AD 67**. Luke-Acts would need to have been written before this because Acts ends with Paul still alive.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Irenaeus of Lyons, "Irenæus against Heresies," in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 438.

<sup>6</sup> Geisler, *A Popular Survey*, 76.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>8</sup> This is known by strong tradition. Forrest Weiland, "NT510: New Testament Survey I," lecture, Veritas International University, Murrieta, CA, February, 2017, lecture 3.

## Key Passages

### 1. Luke's emphasis on women.

There is a heavy emphasis on the **role of women** in God's **plan of salvation** from the beginning of Luke. Right from the start he focuses on two: **Mary** and **Elizabeth**.

- The angel Gabriel announces to Zechariah (a **man**) that he would have a son (John the Baptist) but **he doubts** (Lk. 1:20). As a result, he is **unable to speak** until the son is born.
- In contrast, Mary (a **woman**) believes when Gabriel announces that she will become pregnant even though **she is a virgin**.

#### **Luke 1— The Birth of Jesus Foretold**

<sup>28</sup> The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you..." <sup>31</sup> You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.

<sup>34</sup> "**How will this be,**" Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

<sup>35</sup> The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.

<sup>38</sup> [Mary said] "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "**May your word to me be fulfilled.**"

- Mary visits **Elizabeth** and Elizabeth (a **woman**) is **filled** with the **Holy Spirit** and prophecies.

#### **Luke 1:41–45 – Mary visits Elizabeth**

<sup>41</sup> When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and **Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit**. <sup>42</sup> In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! <sup>43</sup> But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? <sup>44</sup> As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. <sup>45</sup> **Blessed is she who has believed** that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"

- **Mary** breaks forth into a **song of praise** (The Magnificat) at the honor of being used by God in such a powerful way.

### Luke 1:46–55 – Mary’s Song

<sup>46</sup> And Mary said:

“My soul glorifies the Lord <sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

<sup>48</sup> for he has been **mindful of the humble state of his servant**.

From now on all generations will call me blessed,

<sup>49</sup> for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name.

<sup>50</sup> **His mercy extends** to those who fear him, from generation to generation.

<sup>51</sup> He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;

he has **scattered those who are proud** in their inmost thoughts.

<sup>52</sup> He has **brought down rulers** from their thrones but **has lifted up the humble**.

<sup>53</sup> He has **filled the hungry** with good things

but has sent the rich away empty.

<sup>54</sup> He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful

<sup>55</sup> to Abraham and his descendants forever, **just as he promised** our ancestors.”

## 2. Luke’s interest in historical **accuracy**.

- a. We see Luke’s statement about accuracy being a very **high priority**.<sup>9</sup>

### Luke 1:1–4 – Introduction

**1** Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, <sup>2</sup> just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. <sup>3</sup> With this in mind, since I myself have **carefully investigated** everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, <sup>4</sup> so that **you may know the certainty** of the things you have been taught.

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<sup>9</sup> There’s a great book by 1<sup>st</sup> century scholar Colin J. Hemer who confirmed nearly a hundred details in Acts to be without a single error. Luke, who carefully wrote Acts, also wrote the gospel of Luke with great accuracy and care (Acts 1:1-2). See Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990).

- b. Example of historiographic detail from Luke:

**Luke 3:1-2 – John the Baptist Prepares the Way**

**3** In the fifteenth year of the reign of **Tiberius** Caesar—when Pontius **Pilate** was governor of Judea, **Herod** tetrarch of Galilee, his brother **Philip** tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis, and **Lysanias** tetrarch of Abilene—<sup>2</sup> during the high-priesthood of **Annas** and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

There are **6** historical indicators in the 2 verses above:<sup>10</sup>

1. 15th year of **Tiberius** (AD 29)
2. Pontius **Pilate**, governor of Judea (AD 26-36)
3. **Herod** Antipas (son of Herod the Great) ruler in Judea/Galilee (4 BC- AD 39)
4. **Philip** ruler in Iturea and Trachonitis (4 BC – AD 34)
5. **Lysanias**, a ruler in Abilene
6. **Annas** the Cephass, Jewish high priests

### 3. Luke's genealogy going back to **Adam**.

- a. Only Luke and Matthew have genealogies of Christ. **Matthew goes forward** from Abraham; **Luke goes back** to Adam. Going back to Adam emphasizes the gospel is for all people (not just Jews).

Luke's Genealogy (Luke 3:23-38):

Jesus → Joseph → Eli → Nathan → David → Abraham → **Adam (father of all)**

Matthew's Genealogy (Matt. 1:1-17):

**Abraham (father of Jews)** → David → Solomon → Jacob → Joseph → Jesus

### 4. Attention is given to Jesus' call to **discipleship**.

- a. Jesus calls his followers to deny themselves every day.

**Luke 9:23–24 – Jesus Predicts His Death**

<sup>23</sup> Then he said to them all: **“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. <sup>24</sup> For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it.**

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<sup>10</sup> From Forrest Weiland, “NT510: New Testament Survey I,” lecture, Veritas International University, Murrieta, CA, February, 2017, Gospels.ppt, slide 46.

- b. Jesus says there's a **cost** to following him.

**Luke 9:57–62 – The Cost of Following Jesus**

<sup>57</sup> As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, “**I will follow you wherever you go.**”

<sup>58</sup> Jesus replied, “**Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.**”

<sup>59</sup> He said to another man, “**Follow me.**”

But he replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”

<sup>60</sup> Jesus said to him, “**Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.**”

<sup>61</sup> Still another said, “**I will follow you, Lord;** but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.”

<sup>62</sup> Jesus replied, “**No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.**”

- c. **Anyone** can be disciples of Jesus (not just Jews/men!).

**Luke 10:38–39 – At the Home of Martha and Mary**

<sup>38</sup> As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a **woman named Martha** opened her home to him. <sup>39</sup> She had a sister called **Mary**, who **sat at the Lord's feet listening** to what he said.

- d. Jesus again taught about **cost of being a disciple**.

**Luke 14:25–27 – The Cost of Being a Disciple**

<sup>25</sup> Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: <sup>26</sup> “**If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple.** <sup>27</sup> **And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.**”

**QUESTION: What can ‘hating his father/mother/wife/children’ mean?**

**5. Jesus’ parables in Luke emphasize a ‘Gospel for outcasts’ (chaps. 9-18).**

There are many parables in Luke that show “**the theme of reversal**: humble ‘outsiders’ receive blessings or commendation, while prideful ‘insiders’ suffer rebuke or loss.”<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Strauss, *Four Portraits*, 274.

a. Parable of the Good Samaritan.

Luke 10:30–33

<sup>30</sup> In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They **stripped him** of his clothes, **beat him** and went away, **leaving him half dead**. <sup>31</sup> A **priest** happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> So too, a **Levite**, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a **Samaritan**, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.

- A man was brutally attacked by robbers and left for dead.
- A priest and a Levite saw him but didn't help.
- A **Samaritan** (**despised** half-Jew) was the only one who helped.
- Emphasizes God's concern for ministering to the **outcast**.

b. Jesus at a Pharisee's House.

Luke 14:12-13

<sup>12</sup> Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. <sup>13</sup> But when you give a banquet, invite the **poor**, the **crippled**, the **lame**, the **blind**...

- This again emphasizes God's concern for the **outcast**.

c. Parable of the Great Banquet.

Luke 14:16-18, 21

<sup>16</sup> Jesus replied: “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. <sup>17</sup> At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’

<sup>18</sup> “But they all alike began to **make excuses**... just bought a field... just bought oxen... just got married...

<sup>21</sup> “The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and **bring in the poor**, the **crippled**, the **blind** and the **lame**.’

- The poor, sinners, and lowlives **responded** more positively.



d. Parable of the Lost Coin, Lost Sheep.

Luke 15:3–6

<sup>3</sup>Then Jesus told them this parable: <sup>4</sup>“Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? <sup>5</sup>And when he finds it, he **joyfully** puts it on his shoulders... <sup>6</sup>Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘**Rejoice with me**; I have found my lost sheep.’

Luke 15:8

<sup>8</sup>“Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn’t she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? <sup>9</sup>... ‘**Rejoice with me**; I have found my lost coin.’

- A person is **sad** when they lose something valuable (whether a **coin** or **sheep**). But when they are found, there’s **much rejoicing!**
- In the same way, we should rejoice that **God is seeking and saving the lost.**

e. The Prodigal Son (15:11-32).

- A man has two sons – the older son represents the **religious** leaders. The younger son represents the **outsiders** (Gentiles, Samaritans, non-Jews).
- The younger son wants nothing to do with the father, demands his inheritance, and squanders his wealth. But then the younger son comes to his senses and goes back to his father.
- The **father receives** his repentant younger son. Instead of being happy for his brother, the older son is **angry** and **jealous**.

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