

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

God's Plan of Salvation #1

Introductory Matters

- Luke's gospel is the first instalment of a two-volume work and describes how God **fulfils OT promises and his plan of salvation**, climaxing in Jesus Christ through his life, death, resurrection, and ascension
- The book of Acts describes the power of the gospel in forming a renewed people of God
- **Author**: Luke, a doctor (Col 4:14), is credited in the oldest manuscript (late 2nd century AD) and by early church fathers
- **Date of writing**: Likely AD 70—since the writings describe the struggles of the 1st century church

Distinctive Features

- Longest and most detailed narrative of Jesus' birth (1-2)
- Jesus' interaction with those on the fringe of society
- Jesus' interaction with women (8:1-3)
- Emphasis on parables—18 unique ones including the Good Samaritan (10:25-37) and the Prodigal Son (15:11-23)
- Greek audience in mind with focus on learning
- Luke was a physician who was quite learned and detailed

Preface of Luke's Gospel

- “Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, ²just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. ³With 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, ⁴so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught” (1:1-4)

Preface of Luke's Gospel

- One long sentence in Classical Greek style
- Not being an apostle, his writing relied on interviewing eyewitnesses
- For example, he probably asked Mary what the angel Gabriel said to her in Lu 1, because the account is so vivid and detailed
- His purpose for writing is to show how God fulfilled OT promises and plan of salvation, climaxing in the person, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus
- An “orderly account” means a systematic, thoughtful presentation of a series of events
- Written to Theophilus, a patron, so that he (and others) would “know the certainty of the things taught” (1:4)

Purpose for Writing

- To strengthen and confirm the faith of believers by:
- “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, so that you may know the **certainty of the things** you have been taught” (1:3-4) by:
 - Providing a reliable and historical account of the birth of Jesus during the edict of Caesar Augustus
 - “In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.)” (2:1-2)

Purpose for Writing

- To strengthen and confirm the faith of believers by:
 - Aligning the rest of the life and ministry of Jesus with the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius
 - “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 Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene—” (3:1)

Purpose for Writing

- **To strengthen and confirm the faith of believers by:**
 - Explaining God's universal work in Jesus Christ. Unlike Matthew, Luke places the genealogy after the birth narratives. In the Greco-Roman, genealogies were not as significant as in the Hebrew world
 - Luke takes his genealogy all the way back to Adam (3:37), which reflects his cosmic universal presentation of Jesus
 - Unique to Luke is what it means to be a good neighbour in the parable of a good Samaritan (10:29-37). Luke alone records Jesus touching a Gentile (5:12-16)

Purpose for Writing

- To strengthen and confirm the faith of believers by:
 - Proclaiming Jesus as the Saviour of the world. In the Greco-Roman world, there is only one lord and that is the emperor
 - When Luke proclaims Jesus as the Saviour of the world, this is not just a religious claim but a strong political statement as well

Birth Narratives

- Before we talk about the conception of Jesus, the theme of the barren woman is significant
- In the history of redemption, beginning with Abraham and Sarah, an heir was needed to fulfil that promise (Gen 12)
- One must trace a pattern of miracles to wives of patriarchs, who were barren, including Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Hannah, and Naomi
- At every key juncture of history, God's promises had to be transmitted with a barren woman

Birth Narratives

- The message is on God's faithfulness and ability to keep his promises, which no human can alter
- God had to supernaturally intervene. Otherwise, those promises cannot be transmitted to the next generation
- Given the OT background, we are told in Luke's gospel that Elizabeth, the would-be mother of John the Baptist, is barren. God is at work again!
- The barren women theme culminates when Mary is introduced. She is a virgin (1:27) but her baby was conceived by the Holy Spirit (1:35). A new hope begins!

Jesus Fulfilled the OT

- ²⁵ “He said to them, ‘How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?’ ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (Lu 24:25-27)

Christocentric Reading of the OT

- ⁴⁴ “He said to them, ‘this is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.’
⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures” (Lu 24:44-45)

Summary

- Luke's gospel recalls God's faithfulness to fulfilling his plan of salvation, beginning in the OT and climaxing in Jesus Christ
- This account, more than others, focuses on the inclusion of Gentiles as the people of God
- Anyone, Jew or Gentile, who trust in Jesus can belong in God's community
- Just as Jesus has inaugurated the fulfilment of God's promises, so he will bring it to completion
- In the meantime, we are called to "witness" Jesus (Acts 1:8), though being a disciple is not easy

Reflection Question

- How does God's plan of salvation affect the way you view yourself and the community to which you belong?