

# The Gospel of Luke

## Study Notes

### Introduction

The Gospel of Luke tells the fascinating story of Jesus' life, ministry, and announcement of God's Upside-Down Kingdom. Luke emphasizes how Jesus was the fulfillment of the Hebrew Scriptures, setting the stage for the Jesus movement that would spread throughout the ancient world. Use these study notes to dig deeper into the ideas introduced in the first five videos in our Luke-Acts series: The Birth of Jesus, The Baptism of Jesus, The Prodigal Son, The Crucifixion of Jesus, and the Resurrection of Jesus.

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# The Literary Design of Luke's Gospel

## Reading the Gospel According to Luke

Prologue - Luke 1:1-4

Introduction - Luke 1:5-2:51: John and Jesus Introduced

Part 1 - Luke 3:1-9:50: Jesus Announces God's Kingdom in Galilee

- Chapter 3: Jesus is introduced as the Son of God and Son of Adam
- Chapter 4: Jesus inaugurates his Kingdom mission
- Chapters 5-6: Jesus confronts Israel's leaders and teaches about the Kingdom
- Chapters 7-9: Jesus' healings and parables of the Kingdom

Part 2 - Luke 9:51-19:27: Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem

- Chapter 9:51-13:21: The journey part 1: Following Jesus 101
- Chapter 13:22-17:10: The journey part 2: God's generous and dangerous offer of the Kingdom
- Chapter 17:11-19:27: The journey part 3: Jesus' coming Kingdom

Part 3 - Luke 19:28-24:53: Jesus' Confrontation, Execution, and Resurrection in Jerusalem

- Chapter 19:28-21: Jesus confronts Jerusalem's leaders during Passover week
- Chapter 22-23: Jesus' last Passover, arrest, and execution
- Chapter 24: The empty tomb and resurrection appearances

## The Unity of Luke-Acts

Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-2 show that both books were written by the same author and were meant to be read as a single continuous work.

Luke 1:1-4 shows that the Gospel of Luke was compiled from sources and eyewitness reports of events to help followers of Jesus understand his significance and story with more certainty.

## The Old Testament in Luke-Acts

Luke sees the Old Testament not merely as a collection of predictions about a future Messiah, but rather as a book of self-involving promises made by God to the people of Israel. Through his covenant promise, God has bound himself to this particular people and can therefore be trusted to fulfill his word. Luke's claim is that this is precisely what has happened in the life of Jesus and in the continuing history of the people that follow him as their Lord.

Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 192-93

## Patterns in Luke's Engagement with the Old Testament

1. Scripture quotations are almost always found in the mouths of characters in the story and not in overt authorial commentary. This narrative device imparts a dramatic nature to Luke's intertextual citations. Readers are required to interpret the echoes of the Hebrew Bible in light of the narrative's unfolding plot.
2. Most of the references to the Hebrew Bible consist of narrative parallels that are suggested through the literary devices of allusion and echo. The effect of this narrative technique is to lure us into the work of close and careful reading, seeking to discern and interpret the intertextual clues woven into the fabric of the story.

Illustration: "Luke is like a dramatic theatrical performance, where the primary action of the Gospel is played out on center stage, in front of the spotlights. On a scrim at the back of the stage, however, there is displayed a kaleidoscopic series of flickering sepia-toned images from Israel's Scriptures. The image can flash by almost unnoticed; however, if the viewer pays careful attention, there are many moments where the words or gestures of the characters onstage mirror something on the shifting backdrop, or, possibly, the other way around. In these moments, the reader is expected to have a flash of interpretive insight, as the 'live action' recapitulates a scene from an older story, allowing the two narrative moments to interpret each other. It is not Luke's style to develop sustained sequences in which the patterns run parallel; rather, almost as soon as we recognize an echo of the Old Testament, the moment has passed and a new image appears on the backdrop ... The story keeps moving, and leaves us with a powerful but indistinct sense of analogy between God's saving acts for Israel in the past and the new liberating events coming to fulfillment in the story of Jesus."

Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*

## Main Themes in Luke

The first theme appears in Luke chapters 1-2. Jesus' birth story is part of a larger pattern of God fulfilling his promises to individuals who represent the story of Israel.

Character	Promise	OT Portrait	Fulfillment	Poem of Celebration
<b>The Temple: Zechariah</b>	Elderly couple will bear a promised son (Luke 1:13-20).	Abraham and Sarai	Pregnancy (1:24) and birth (1:57)	Zechariah's Song (1:68-79)
<b>The Poor: Mary</b>	A woman of low status will bear the promised deliverer (Luke 1:31-33).	Hannah	Birth of Jesus (2:6-7)	Mary's Song (1:47-55)
<b>The Prophets: Simeon and Anna</b>	God promised that they would see the Messiah born in their day (Luke 2:25-26, 36-37).	Isaiah and Hannah	They see Jesus in the temple (2:26-27)	Simeon's Song (2:29-32) and Anna's praise (2:38)

These representative characters show how God is at work fulfilling his ancient covenant promises to Israel, and they set up the rest of Luke's account as one large fulfillment narrative.

Luke has designed the introductory section to focus on the interweaving of John and Jesus' story as the continuation of Israel's story.

Design Sequence	Episode Narrative Perspective		
Frame	1:5 "In the days of King Herod of Judah ..."		
A	1:5-7	Introduction to John's parents Zechariah and Elizabeth	Narrator
B	1:8-20	Annunciation of John's birth to Zechariah + poem	Zechariah
C	1:21-23	People's response to Zechariah's vision	People around Zechariah
D	1:24-25	Elizabeth becomes pregnant with John	Elizabeth
E	1:26-38	Annunciation of Jesus' birth to Mary + poem	Mary
F	1:39-45	Mary meets Elizabeth, Elizabeth declared Mary to be the blessed one	Mary and Elizabeth
E	1:46-56	Celebration of Mary's pregnancy + poem	Mary
D	1:57-58	Elizabeth gives birth to John	Elizabeth
C	1:59-66	People's response to Zechariah's naming of John	People around Zechariah
B	1:67-79	Zechariah celebrates the birth of John + poem	Zechariah
A	1:80	Conclusion to John's youth	Narrator
Frame	2:1 "In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus ..."		

The second main theme centers around Mary, Jesus' mother. Luke's depiction of Mary is crucially important for introducing the themes he will develop throughout the two volumes. Mary's portrait is a combination of two narrative traditions from the Hebrew Scriptures: (1) the deliverer of God's people (male or female), and (2) the miraculous mother of a male deliverer.

### 1. The Male or Female Deliverer

Female deliverers include the midwives Shiphrah and Puah (Exod. 2:15-21), Deborah (Judg. 4-5), Jael (Judg. 4:17-22; 5:24-27), and Esther.

Male deliverers include Joseph, Moses, the judges, Samuel, and David.

## Mary and Other Deliverer Figures

Luke 1:28 - Angel to Mary <i>"Rejoice, O graced one! The Lord is with you."</i>	Judges 6:12 - Angel to Gideon <i>"The Lord is with you, O valiant one!"</i>
Luke 1:29-30 - Angel to Mary <i>Mary was disturbed at this word, and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. And the angel said, "Don't be afraid, Mary!"</i>	Judges 6:22-23 - Angel to Gideon <i>When Gideon saw that it was the angel of Yahweh, he said, "Oh no! I've seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!" But Yahweh said to him, "Peace! Don't be afraid!"</i>
Luke 1:35 - Angel to Mary <i>"The Holy Spirit will come upon you."</i>	Holy Spirit empowerment commonly describes the male judges.  Othniel: Judges 3:9-10 - Gideon: Judges 6:34  Jephthah: Judges 11:29 - Samson: Judges 13:25  Deborah is described in a parallel role, and is the only judge who is also called "a prophet" (Judg. 5:4).
Luke 1:42 - Elizabeth to Mary <i>"You are blessed (ευλογουμένη) among women."</i>	Judges 5:24 - Deborah of Jael <i>"Most blessed (Sept. ευλογηθειη) among women."</i>

## 2. Miraculous Mothers of Male Deliverers

Mothers of male deliverers include Sarah (Gen. 17-18, 21), Rebekah (Gen. 25:21), Leah and Rachel (Gen. 29:31-30:24), Samson's mother (Judg. 13), and Hannah (1 Sam. 1-2).

### Mary and Other Mothers of Male Deliverers

Luke 1:31 - Angel to Mary: <i>"You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will call his name ..."</i>	Genesis 16:11 - Angel to Hagar: <i>"You are now pregnant and will give birth to a son, and you will call his name, Ishmael."</i>  Judges 13:5 - Angel to Samson's mother: <i>"You will become pregnant and give birth to a son."</i>  Isaiah 7:14 - Isaiah to Ahaz: <i>"The young woman will conceive and will give birth to a son, and she will call his name, Immanuel."</i>
Luke 1:32-33 - Angel to Mary: <i>"He will be great and called Son of the Most High ... and he will reign over the house of Jacob."</i>	Genesis 17:16-17 - Angel to Abraham about Sarah: <i>"I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her."</i>
Luke 1:37 - Angel to Mary: <i>"For no matter is impossible (αδυνάτος) before God."</i>	Genesis 18:14 - God to Abraham about Sarah: <i>"Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?'"</i> <i>Is anything too wonderful for Yahweh [Heb.]? For no matter is impossible (αδυνάτος) for God [Sept]."</i>
Luke 1:44 - Elizabeth to Mary: <i>"Behold, when the voice of your greeting came into my ears, the child in my womb leapt (σκιρτάω) for joy."</i>	Genesis 25:22 - Rebekah <i>"But the children leapt (σκιρτάω Sept.) within her ..."</i>

Mary's pregnancy both belongs to the series of famous mothers of deliverers in the Hebrew Scriptures, in that it is enabled by a miraculous act of God, but it also transcends the series, in that her pregnancy is virginal. In Elizabeth and her son the storyline of Israel's Scriptures culminates, while in Mary and her son the new creation begins. It is not surprising, therefore, that, while Mary does stand in the succession of biblical mothers who conceive through God's power, she is more especially and more emphatically portrayed by Luke as in the succession of human agents of divine deliverance from their enemies ... Mary's motherhood is celebrated as part of her active role in a great act of God for the salvation of his people. Mary's motherhood is of national and even world-changing significance.

Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 58

In Luke 1:46-55, Mary's song (the Magnificat) is crucially important for introducing the core theological themes of Luke's Gospel. It has a symmetrical, mirrored design.

God brings a great reversal for Mary.
<p><sup>46</sup>My soul glorifies the Lord,  <sup>47</sup>and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.  <sup>48</sup>For he has had regard for <b>the lowliness</b> (ταπεινωσις) of <b>his servant</b> (δουλος);  for behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed.  <sup>49</sup>For the <b>Mighty One</b> (δυνατος) has done great things for me;  and holy is his name.  <sup>50</sup>And his <b>covenant love</b> (ελεος), is upon <b>generation after generation</b>  toward those who fear him.</p>
Hinge: Mary's story is a paradigm for God's work in history.
<p><sup>51</sup>He has enacted power with his arm;  he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their heart.</p>
Future redemption will mirror Mary's story.
<p><sup>52</sup>He has brought down <b>mighty ones</b> (δυναστα) from their thrones,  and has exalted those who are <b>lowly</b> (ταπεινος).  <sup>53</sup>He has filled the hungry with good things  and sent away the rich empty-handed.  <sup>54</sup>He has given help to Israel <b>his servant</b> (δουλος)  in remembrance of his <b>covenant love</b> (ελεος).  <sup>55</sup>As he spoke to our fathers,  to Abraham and his seed <b>unto the age</b>.</p>

Mary, in her "low status" (v. 48) is clearly paradigmatic of those whom God exalts. But she does not only represent them. In her own exaltation by God, from low status to being the mother of the Messiah, she becomes the means of the exaltation of the lowly in her generation through the coming of the Messiah. This is why the acts of divine "reversal" and salvation can be described in the past tense, as one single act of salvation for God's people. Mary's becoming the mother of the Messiah is the beginning of the exaltation of the lowly and the humiliation of the exalted in Israel that her son will accomplish.

Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 70

Mary's song is also a creative collage of intertextual echoes from salvation songs all over the Hebrew Bible.

Mary's Song	Old Testament Intertexts
<p>Luke 1:46-47 My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.</p>	<p>1 Samuel 2:1 My heart rejoices in Yahweh, my horn is raised up by Yahweh ... for I will rejoice in your salvation.</p> <p>Habakkuk 3:18 I will rejoice in Yahweh, I will be glad in the God of my salvation.</p> <p>Psalms 35:9 And my soul shall rejoice in the LORD; It shall exult in his salvation.</p>
<p>Luke 1:48 For he has looked upon the lowliness of his servant; for behold, from this time on all generations will count me fortunate (μακαριζω).</p>	<p>1 Samuel 2:11 O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of your maidservant and remember me, and not forget your maidservant.</p> <p>Genesis 30:13 Leah said, "Fortunate (μακαριος) am I! For women will call me fortunate (μακαριζω)." So she named him fortunate [= Heb. Asher].</p> <p>Psalms 72:17 [Sept.] May his [messianic seed] name be blessed (ευλογημενος) forever ... may all the families of the earth be blessed (ευλογεω) in him, all the nations will count him fortunate (μακαριζω).</p>
<p>Luke 1:49 For the Mighty One has done great things for me; and holy is his name.</p>	<p>Deuteronomy 10:20-21 You shall fear the LORD your God ... he is your praise and he is your God, who has done these great things and awesome things for you which your eyes have seen.</p> <p>Psalms 111:9 He has sent redemption to his people, he has commanded his covenant forever, holy and awesome is his name.</p>
<p>Luke 1:50 And his mercy is upon generation after generation toward those who fear him.</p>	<p>Psalms 103:17 For Yahweh's covenant love [Sept. "mercy" = ελεος / Hebrew: חסד] is from age to age over those who fear him, and his righteousness for the children of children.</p>
<p>Luke 1:51 He has done great deeds with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their heart.</p>	<p>Exodus 6:1 With my mighty hand I will send Israel out, and with my exalted arm he will bring them out of Pharaoh's land.</p> <p>Isaiah 51:9 Wake up, wake up, put on strength O arm of Yahweh, as in the days of past generations long ago.</p> <p>Psalms 118:15 [Sept.] The right arm of the Lord has done great deeds, the right arm of the Lord has exalted me.</p> <p>Psalms 89:11 [Sept.] You brought down the proud as one that is slain, and with the arm of your power, you scattered your enemies.</p>

<p>Luke 1:52-53  <i>He has brought down rulers from their thrones,  and has exalted those who were humble.  He has filled the hungry with good things;  and sent away the rich empty-handed.</i></p>	<p>1 Samuel 2:7-8  <i>The Lord sends poverty and wealth; he humbles  and he exalts. He raises the poor from the dust and  lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them  with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor.</i></p>
<p>Luke 1:54-55  <i>He has given help to his servant Israel,  in remembrance of his mercy,  just as he spoke to our fathers,  to Abraham and his descendants forever.</i></p>	<p>Isaiah 41:8-9  <i>But you, Israel, my servant,  Jacob, whom I have chosen,  you descendants of Abraham my friend,  I took you from the ends of the earth,  from its farthest corners I called you.  I said, "You are my servant";  I have chosen you and have not rejected you.</i></p> <p>Psalm 98:3  <i>He has remembered his covenant love and his  faithfulness to the house of Israel;  All the ends of the earth have seen  the salvation of our God.</i></p> <p>Micah 7:20  <i>You will be faithful to Jacob,  and show love to Abraham,  as you pledged on oath to our  ancestors in days long ago.</i></p>

This usage of traditional scriptural language in a new context is not a sign of a lack of originality. Rather it is testimony to the art of the poet who can take language already laden with meaning for people familiar with the heritage of their Scriptures and use it to describe new situations.

M. Horgan, "The Hodayot (1QH) and New Testament Poetry," 190



### 3. Mary's Faith and Zechariah's Doubt

Mary's humble faith and elevation is in contrast to the priest Zechariah's doubt and lowering of status (in becoming mute). Once he regains his ability to speak, he utters a song woven entirely out of lines from Israel's prophetic hopes.

<p>Luke 1:68  <i>Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,  for he has visited us and accomplished  redemption for his people,</i></p>	<p>Exodus 4:31  <i>So the people believed; and when they heard  that the LORD has visited the sons of Israel  and that he had seen their affliction ...</i></p> <p>Exodus 6:6  <i>Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, "I am the LORD, and I  will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians,  and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem  you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments."</i></p>
<p>Luke 1:69  <i>And has raised up a horn of salvation for us  in the house of David his servant—</i></p>	<p>Psalm 132:13, 17-18  <i>For the LORD has chosen Zion;  he has desired it for his habitation.  There I will cause the horn of David to spring forth; I have  prepared a lamp for mine anointed.  His enemies I will clothe with shame, but  upon himself his crown shall shine.</i></p> <p>2 Samuel 22:3  <i>My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the  horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge ...</i></p> <p>Psalm 148:13-14  <i>Let them praise the name of the LORD,  for his name alone is exalted; his glory is above earth  and heaven. And he has lifted up a horn for his people.</i></p>
<p>Luke 1:70-71  <i>As he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old—  Salvation from our enemies, and from  the hand of all who hate us;</i></p>	<p>Psalm 18:17  <i>He saved me from my strong enemy, and from those  who hated me, for they were too mighty for me.</i></p>
<p>Luke 1:72-73  <i>to show mercy toward our fathers, and to remember his holy  covenant,  the oath which he swore to Abraham our Father ...</i></p>	<p>Micah 7:20  <i>You will give truth to Jacob and covenant love to Abraham,  the oath you swore to our forefathers from the days of old.</i></p>
<p>Luke 1:74-75  <i>to grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our  enemies,  might serve him without fear,  in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.</i></p>	<p>Micah 4:10  <i>From Babylon you will be rescued; There the LORD  will redeem you from the hand of your enemies.</i></p>
<p><i>And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High.  For you will go on before the Lord to prepare his ways;</i></p>	<p>Malachi 3:1  <i>Behold, I am going to send my messenger, and he  will prepare the way before me. And the Lord, whom  you seek, will suddenly come to his temple ...</i></p>
<p><i>To give to his people the knowledge of salvation, by the  forgiveness of their sins, because of the mercy of our God</i></p>	<p>Micah 7:18  <i>Who is a God like you, who forgives iniquity and  passes over the rebellious act of the remnant  of his possession? He does not retain his anger  forever, because he delights in covenant love.</i></p>

<p><i>With which the sunrise from on high will visit us.</i></p>	<p>Malachi 4:2  <i>But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings ...</i></p>
<p><i>To shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death,  to guide our feet into the way of peace.</i></p>	<p>Isaiah 9:2  <i>The people who walk in darkness will see a great light;  those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them.</i></p>

#### 4. The Role of the Spirit in the Events of Jesus' Life

Luke emphasizes the role of the Spirit in the events leading up to Jesus' birth and in empowering Jesus himself for his Kingdom mission.

The Spirit is the divine agent in the birth stories of John the Baptist and Jesus (Luke 1:15, 34, 41, 67, 80; Luke 2:25-27).

Jesus is empowered by the Spirit at his baptism (Luke 3:16, 22), during his temptation in the desert, and at the start of his ministry (Luke 4:1, 14, 18 = Isa. 61:1).

### Part 1: Luke 3:1-9:50

Jesus' mission in Galilee is to announce the Kingdom of God and bring it to the poor, hurting, and outcast.

#### Luke 3:23-38: Luke's Genealogy

Luke's genealogy is different from Matthew's genealogy as it embodies a different set of theological claims about Jesus' identity.

#### The Enoch Dimension and the Number Seven

The number seven was an important factor in the design of Luke's genealogy. There are 77 (7 x 11) generations between Adam and Jesus in Luke 3:23-38, which is a number of ultimate fulfillment. Remember Lamech's 77 in Genesis 4:24 and Jesus' ironic allusion to it in Matthew 18:22.

Enoch is in the seventh position (as he is in Gen. 5:21), the only ancestor of Jesus to share his name is in the 49th position, and Jesus himself is in the 77th position.

There are 49 (= 7 x 7) generations between Adam and "Jesus" (Ἰησοῦς, Luke 3:29), the only ancestor to share Jesus of Nazareth's name. The number 49 echoes the ten Jubilee cycles from Daniel 9 (7 x 7).

Luke has designed the genealogy so that multiple sevens conclude with a key patriarch.

1st seven: Enoch	6th seven: Joseph
2nd seven: Shelah	7th seven: Jesus
3rd seven: Abraham	8th seven: Shealtiel
4th seven: Admin	9th seven: Mattathias
5th seven: David	10th seven: Joseph
11th seven = 77th generation = Jesus of Nazareth	

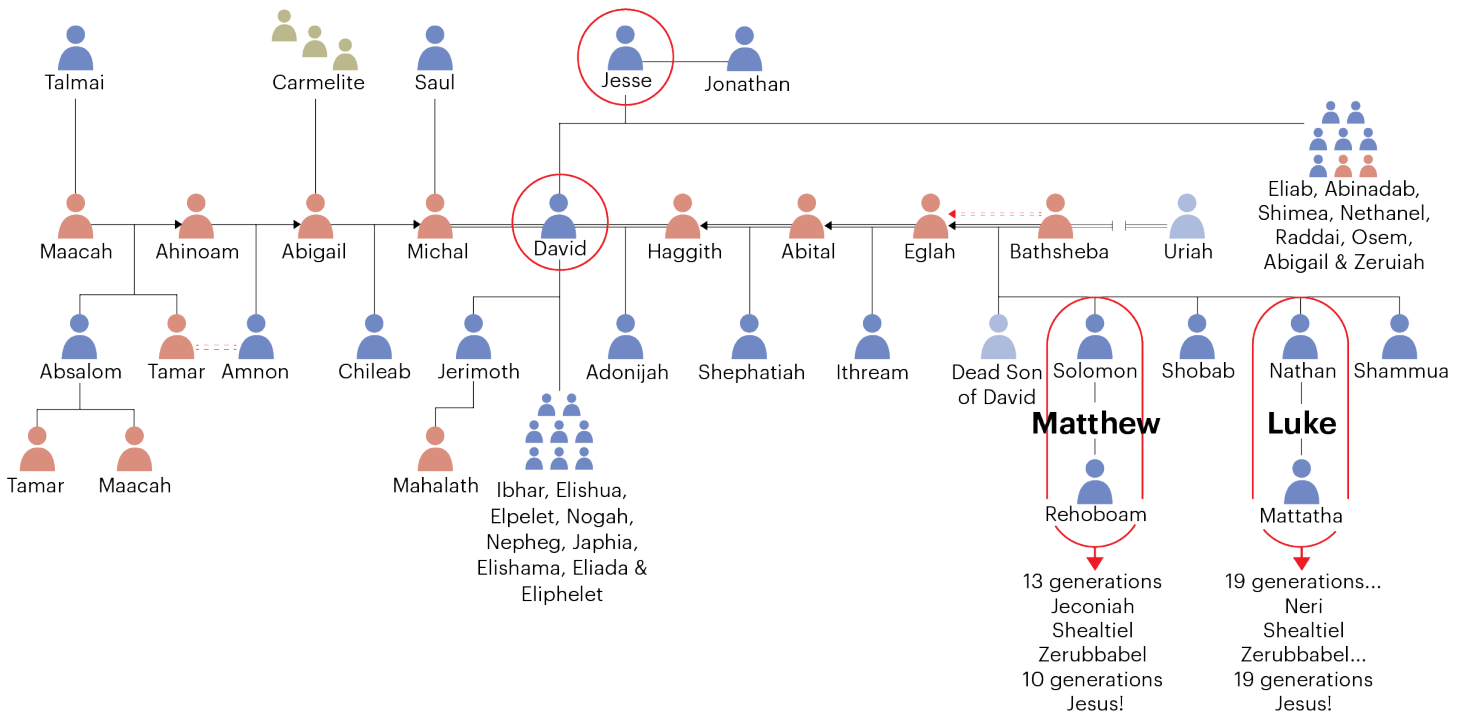
Luke's genealogy embodies a claim about Jesus' identity. It gives Jesus the place of ultimate significance in world history. It includes and highlights his descent from David by the non-royal line as the prophesied messianic son. However, he is more than just a new David. David has his own special place as the fifth "seventh," as does Abraham as the third seventh, but Jesus' position at the end of the eleventh seven, in the seventy-seventh generation surpasses that of every predecessor from Adam onwards. He is greater than Enoch and greater than Abraham and David. He is the consummation of human history.

Richard Bauckham, "The Lukan Genealogy of Jesus" in *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 365

### The David Dimension

Luke's genealogy is the same as Matthew's genealogy (Matt. 1:1-17) between Abraham up to David, but they part ways after David. Matthew follows the royal family in Jerusalem that came from Solomon, but Luke instead follows the lesser known Nathan, the ninth son of David.

The family line joins back up to Matthew in the person of Zerubbabel (Matt. 1:13 // Luke 1:27), but it separates again until Jesus' adoptive father Joseph.



It seems that Luke wants the descent from David to evoke not the high status of royal descent, but the low status of David's humble origins. This is confirmed by the genealogy Luke gives to Jesus, which traces Jesus' descent through Joseph from David and back to Adam. This is a sophisticated theological text, embodying, as biblical genealogies do, much more than just biological information. According to this genealogy, Jesus was descended from David not through Solomon and the kings of Judah as in Matthew's genealogy, but through David's little-known ninth son Nathan. While making contact with the official line of heirs to the Davidic throne in Zerubbabel and his father Shealtiel, the genealogy otherwise consists of entirely unknown names between Nathan and Joseph. This embodies an interpretation of the prophecies of the Davidic messiah, according to which the Messiah is to come not from the line of David's royal successors but from David's own family origins in Bethlehem (see Isaiah 11:1-5 and Micah 5:1-2). ... The new king is not to be born in the royal palace in Jerusalem, but in insignificant Bethlehem, where David's own story began ... among the ordinary people. Bethlehem is the city of David, but not of any of David's sons through Solomon.

Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 73-74

## Luke 4:14-21: Jesus' Speech at Nazareth

Jesus' inaugural speech at Nazareth in Luke 4:14-21 is based on Isaiah 61 (and Isa. 58:6). The main theme of his speech is good news of freedom for the poor and oppressed.

*The Spirit of the LORD is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor;  
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim  
liberty to captives  
and recovery of sight for the blind;  
to proclaim the year of favor for Yahweh,  
and the day of vengeance of our God.*

Isaiah 61:1-2

*The Spirit of the LORD is on me, because he has  
anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He  
has sent me to proclaim release for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the  
oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*

Luke 4:18-19

*Will you call this a fast,  
even a day of favor for Yahweh?  
Is this not the fast which I choose,  
to loosen the bonds of wickedness,  
to undo the bands of the yoke,  
and to let the oppressed go free  
and break every yoke?*

Isaiah 58:5b-6

The word "freedom" comes from the Greek *aphesis*, meaning "release," and the Hebrew *deror*, meaning "jubilee liberation" (see Isa. 61:1 and Lev. 25:10).

This is the common word for "forgiveness" in Luke (1:77 or 3:3), but the word's meaning is broader and more accurately means release from burden or bondage. The word in Isaiah 61 is rooted in the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25) and is about release from the social consequences of a society's collective sin: freedom from debt, slavery, poverty, and oppression.

The phrase "the poor" comes from the Greek word "*ptokhos*" and Hebrew word "*aniy*." These words refer to more than economic status. It refers to a person's wider social location in terms of family heritage, land ownership, vocation, gender, ethnicity, education, and religious purity. In Jewish literature, it refers to anyone of low status or anyone who lives outside the socially accepted boundary lines.

Jesus' mission is directed to the poor ... in the holistic sense of those who are for any number of reasons relegated to positions outside the boundaries of God's people. Jesus refuses to recognize those socially determined boundaries, asserting instead that these "outsiders" now can belong to God's family.

Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 211

## Luke 5-9: Jesus' Ministry

The Nazareth announcement sets the agenda for Jesus' healing and teaching ministry in Luke 5-9 where he reaches out to:

- Working-class fishermen (5:1-11)
- A leper (5:12-16)
- A paralyzed man (5:17-27, note the use of *aphesis* with multiple nuances in this story)
- A tax collector (5:27-39, note that while Levi is not economically poor, he is still an outsider)
- A man with a deformed hand (6:6-11)
- Crowds of people in his "Sermon on the Plain" (6:17-49, see discussion below)
- The Roman centurion's servant (7:1-10)
- The grieving widow and mother in Nain (7:11-16)
- The blind, leprous, lame, deaf, and poor who are healed by him (7:22)
- A repentant prostitute (7:36-49, note the repetition of *aphesis* at the conclusion)
- People tormented by demons (11:14-23)
- The hunchbacked woman (13:10-17, note the explicit use of slavery/freedom vocabulary in Jesus' view of her illness)

### The Sermon on the Plain

Jesus' sermon on the plain in Luke 6:17-49 focuses entirely on reversing traditional human economic and value systems (Luke 6:20-26). Jesus' Kingdom rejects violence (Luke 6:27-30) and social hierarchies that promote homogeneity and closed status circles (Luke 6:31-35).

The Kingdom should transform how Jesus' followers relate to wealth. Luke contains more of Jesus' teachings on money than any of the other Gospels, and he focuses on how our relationship to our resources is the most reliable indicator of our true allegiance and devotion (Luke 12:13-31, Luke 16:1-10, Luke 16:19-31, Luke 18:18-30, Luke 19:1-10, Luke 19:11-27).

Status in the Kingdom requires humility and repentance (Luke 6:36-42, see also Luke 9:46-48, Luke 14:7-11, Luke 18:9-14). Following Jesus is useless if we treat it like a mental exercise. Instead, following Jesus must result in a total life transformation (Luke 6:43-49).

Chapter 7 contains three stories about Jesus including three outsiders in the healing power of the Kingdom: the centurion, a grieving widow, and a prostitute. His choices raise suspicion (John the Baptist in Luke 7:18-23) and controversy (the Pharisees in Luke 7:39).

### Reasons for the Israelite Leaders' Opposition to Jesus

Luke writes that the leaders of Israel oppose Jesus because he is radically overturning all their social and religious views. His radical actions include blaspheming against the one God of Israel (5:21-22), eating with tax collectors and sinners (5:30-35), violating Sabbath traditions to heal the poor (6:1-5 and 6:6-11), and welcoming prostitutes into his social circle (7:39).

## Part 2: Luke 9:51-19:28: Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem

Luke places the crucial transition story between Jesus and his disciples—the transfiguration—at an early point in the story (Luke 9:18-50) to set up Luke 9:51 when Jesus “sets his face to go to Jerusalem” to die. This moment in Luke 9:51 echoes Isaiah 50:7.

Luke continually frames the narratives in chapters 9-19 with notes about the journey to Jerusalem and its progress (Luke 9:57; 10:1, 38; 11:53; 13:22, 33; 17:11; 18:31, 35; 19:1, 11, 28).

Part 2 consists mostly of Jesus' teaching and parables, but it is also a travel narrative. It is broken into three subsections marked by Luke 9:51, Luke 13:22, and Luke 17:11, which use similar vocabulary to show the stages of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem.

### Themes in the Journey Narrative

#### 1. Learning on the Go With Jesus

The travel section consists mostly of Jesus' teaching and parables, so Luke portrays discipleship to Jesus as learning on the go.

Jesus teaches the disciples about:

- Prayer (Luke 11:1-13; 18:1-8).
- Upside-down Kingdom values such as loving your neighbor and your enemy using the parable of the good Samaritan, and humility before God using the parable of the Pharisee and tax collector (Luke 18:9-14)
- Wealth and possessions in Luke 12:13-21 (a person's life isn't their stuff), Luke 16:1-15 (parable of the shrewd manager), Luke 16:19-31 (parable of the rich man and Lazarus), and Luke 18:18-30 (rich young ruler)
- Trusting in God's care despite persecution (Luke 12:1-11)

#### 2. Jesus Continues His Mission to the Poor

Jesus demonstrates his love and commitment to the poor and outsiders through the following:

- His teachings about seeking to save the lost in Luke 19:10, and in the lost and found parables in chapter 15
- His relationship with tax collectors like Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10
- Healing the blind in Luke 18:35-43
- Healing the sick in Luke 13:10-17
- His relationships with Samaritans in Luke 17:11-19
- His treatment of children in Luke 18:15-17

#### 3. Jesus' Dinner Parties

Beginning in Luke 6:27-29, Jesus continues to have meals with sinners on the road, like with Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10. He also keeps telling parables set at dinner banquets (Luke 14:1-24 contains two banquet parables) or that culminate in banquets (three times in Luke 15). It's all a celebration of God's Kingdom and new people.

In contrast, Jesus has multiple meals with Israel's leaders that become the place where the two kingdoms clash in Luke 7:36-50, Luke 11:37-54, and Luke 14:1-24.

## Part 3: Luke 19:28-24:49: Jesus's Final Week in Jerusalem

### A Clash of Two Kingdoms

Jesus adopts Moses and Jeremiah's accusations of covenant rebellion and ignorance of Yahweh's purposes, and it grieves him.

Luke 19:41-44: Jesus Approaches Jerusalem	Prophetic Echo Chamber
<p>Luke 19:41 When he approached Jerusalem, he saw the city and wept over it.</p>	<p>Jeremiah 9:1 Oh that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!</p> <p>Jeremiah 13:16b-17 You hope for light, but he will turn it to utter darkness and change it to deep gloom. If you do not listen, I will weep in secret because of your pride; my eyes will weep bitterly, overflowing with tears, because the Lord's flock will be taken captive.</p>
<p>Luke 19:42 If only you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes.</p>	<p>Deuteronomy 32:28-29 For they are a nation lacking in counsel, and there is no understanding in them. Would that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would know their future!</p>
<p>Luke 19:43-44a For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up siegeworks against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, and they will dash you to the ground and your children within you.</p>	<p>Isaiah 29:3-4a I will camp against you encircling you, and I will set siegeworks against you, and I will raise up battle towers against you. Then you will be brought low ...</p>
<p>Luke 19:44b And they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.</p>	<p>Jeremiah 6:15 Were they ashamed because of the abomination they have done? They were not even ashamed at all; they did not even know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time that I visit them.</p>

Jesus announces the destruction of Jerusalem.

<p>Mark 13:14-15 But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where it should not be  (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.  The one who is on the housetop must not go down, or go in to get anything out of his house.</p>	<p>Matthew 24:15-17 Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place  (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.  Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house.</p>	<p>Luke 21:20-21 But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near.  Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city ...</p>
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Jesus portrays his coming death and resurrection as a new Passover/exodus.

<p>Mark 14:22-24</p> <p>While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying,</p> <p>“Take it; this is my body.”</p> <p>Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it.</p> <p>“This is <b>my blood of the covenant</b>, which is poured out for many,” he said to them.</p>	<p>Matthew 26:26-28</p> <p>While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying,</p> <p>“Take and eat; this is my body.”</p> <p>Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you.</p> <p>This is <b>my blood of the covenant</b>, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”</p>	<p>Luke 22:16-20</p> <p>“For I tell you, that I will surely not eat the Passover until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” And taking the cup, giving thanks, he said, “Take this and divide it among yourselves, for I tell you, that I will surely not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God comes.”</p> <p>And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying,</p> <p>“This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”</p> <p>In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying,</p> <p>“This cup is <b>the new covenant in my blood</b>, which is poured out for you.</p>	<p>1 Corinthians 11:23-26</p> <p>For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said,</p> <p>“This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.”</p> <p>In the same way he also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is <b>the new covenant in my blood</b>; do this, as often as you drink, in remembrance of me.”</p>
<p>“My blood of the covenant”</p> <p>Exodus 24:8 See the <b>blood of the covenant</b> that Yahweh has made with you according to all these words.</p> <p>Zechariah 9:11 As for you, because of <b>the blood of my covenant</b> with you, I will set your prisoners free from the pit which there is no water in it.</p>		<p>“The new covenant ... ” → Jeremiah 31:31 “... in my blood” → Exodus 24:8 + Zechariah 9:11</p> <p>Note how in Luke 22:16-19, there is mention of an additional cup before the bread. This maps onto traditional Passover liturgies, where there are multiple cups of wine that punctuate the meal.</p>	



Luke includes multiple unique elements in the passion narrative that highlight Jesus' innocence before the corrupt judicial systems of Israel and Rome.

Jesus said to the chief priests and soldiers from the temple and the elders who came to him, "Have you come out to me as to a rebel [Grk. *lestes* = revolutionary], with swords and clubs? I've been with you all every day in the temple and you didn't stretch out your hand against me."

Luke 22:52-53

But Pilate said to the chief priests and to the crowds, "I find no basis for a charge against this man."

Luke 23:4

Pilate summoned the chief priests and the rulers and the people, and said to them, "You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined him before you, I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against him. No, nor has Herod, for he sent him back to us; and behold, nothing deserving death has been done by him. Therefore I will punish him and release him."

Luke 23:13-16

But they cried out all together, saying, "Away with this man, and release for us Barabbas!" (He was one who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection made in the city, and for murder.) Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again, but they kept on calling out, saying, "Crucify, crucify him!" And he said to them the third time, "Why, what evil has this man done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death; therefore I will punish him and release him." But they were insistent, with loud voices asking that he be crucified. And their voices prevailed. And Pilate pronounced the sentence that their demand be granted. And he released the man they were asking for who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, but he delivered Jesus to their will.

Luke 23:18-25

One of the criminals who were hanged was hurling abuse at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve. But this one has done nothing wrong!"

Luke 23:39-41

Now when the centurion saw what had happened, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent." And all the crowds who came together for this spectacle, when they observed what had happened, they returned home, beating their breasts.

Luke 23:47-48

Luke has adapted the portrait of Jesus' innocence to mirror David's innocence as he fled from Saul.

Then Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul, his father and said to him, "Do not let the king sin against his servant David, since he has not sinned against you, and since his deeds have been very beneficial to you. For he took his life in his hand and struck the Philistine, and the LORD brought about a great deliverance for all Israel; you saw it and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood by putting David to death without a cause?"

1 Samuel 19:4-5

Then David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said to Jonathan, "What have I done? What is my iniquity? And what is my sin before your father, that he is seeking my life?"

1 Samuel 20:1

But Jonathan answered Saul, his father and said to him, "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?"

1 Samuel 20:32

Luke shows how Jesus' death and resurrection are the surprising fulfillment of God's story with Israel and the nations.

The two disciples on the road to Emmaus highlight the contrast between their expectations of Jesus' messianic call and Jesus' own vision of his vocation.

1 Maccabees 4 tells the story of Israel's redemption by the hands of the Maccabees at the famous battle of Emmaus. 1 Maccabees, also called the First Book of Maccabees, is a historical text by an anonymous Jewish author after the restoration of an independent Jewish kingdom around the late 2nd century B.C.

*Now [the Syrian general] Gorgias took five thousand infantry and one thousand cavalry ... to attack the camp of the Jewish people, and strike them suddenly. But Judas heard of it, and he and his warriors moved out to attack the forces in Emmaus. At daybreak Judas appeared in the plain with three thousand men ... As they saw the camp of the Gentiles, strong and fortified, with cavalry all around it, Judas said to those who were with him, "Do not fear their numbers or be afraid when they charge. Remember how our ancestors were saved at the Red Sea, when Pharaoh with his forces pursued them. So now, let us cry to Heaven, to see whether he will favor us and remember his covenant with our ancestors and crush this heathen army before us today. Then all the Gentiles will know that there is one who redeems and saves Israel."*

*When the Syrians looked up and saw them coming against them, they went out from their camp to battle. Then the men with Judas blew their trumpets and engaged in battle. The Gentiles were crushed, and fled into the plain.*

1 Maccabees 4

The disciples' journey to recognize Jesus as the crucified Messiah is portrayed as an ironic reversal of the human redefinition of good and evil in Genesis 2-3.

*But their eyes were prevented from being able to see him.*

Luke 24:16

*And the woman saw that the tree was good for eating, and that it was delightful for the eyes to see and attractive to stare at ...*

Genesis 3:6

*Then their eyes were opened up, and they recognized him, and he became invisible from them.*

Luke 24:31

*And the eyes of the two of them were opened up, and they recognized that they were naked.*

Genesis 3:7a

*And they said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us, as he spoke to us on the road, and as he opened up the Scriptures for us?"*

Luke 24:32

*Jesus said to them, "These are my words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that it was necessary for everything written in the Torah of Moses and in the Prophets and Psalms about me to be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures ... that the Messiah would suffer and be raised from the dead on the third day ...*

Luke 24:44-46

The brilliant dramatic irony of Luke's Emmaus road story nudges the reader inexorably toward a subtle but overwhelming conclusion: the two disciples are wrong to have been discouraged, but right to have hoped for Jesus to be the one who would redeem Israel. In their puzzled disappointment, they truly name Jesus' identity without realizing what they are saying, for the Redeemer of Israel is none other than Israel's God. And Jesus, in truth, is the embodied, unrecognized, but scripturally attested presence of the One for whom they unwittingly hoped.

Richard Hays, *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness*, 74