

JEREMIAH  
BIBLE STUDY SERIES



# LUKE

THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST

DR. DAVID JEREMIAH

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DR. DAVID JEREMIAH

*Prepared by Hudson Bible*



THOMAS NELSON  
*Since 1798*

LUKE  
JEREMIAH BIBLE STUDY SERIES

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The quote by Irenaeus in the Introduction is from *Against Heresies*, 3:1. The quote by Origen is from Eusebius, *History of the Church*, 6:25.

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# INTRODUCTION TO

## *The Gospel of Luke*

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*“It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account”* (Luke 1:3). According to the apostle Paul, Luke was a “beloved physician” (Colossians 4:14) who accompanied him on several of his missionary journeys. However, Luke’s real passion was in setting down an orderly account that detailed the birth, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This was a task for which Luke was well suited, for he was both a thoughtful man of science and a great observer of people. Luke thus took great care in relating the information he collected, but he also emphasized the care that Jesus, as the Great Physician, extended to people everywhere—both Jewish and Gentile alike.

## AUTHOR AND DATE

The Gospel of Luke, as with the other three Gospels, does not list the name of its author. However, the earliest church fathers to mention the Gospel all concurred it was written by Luke, a second-generation follower of Christ who—as a doctor and associate of Paul—was in a position to investigate the stories about Jesus. Irenaeus, who lived c. AD 130–202, stated, “Luke . . . the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him.” Origen (c. AD 185–254) noted, “The third [Gospel was written] by Luke, the Gospel commended by Paul, and composed for Gentile converts.” In addition to this evidence, the writer uses specific medical terminology throughout the Gospel to describe the conditions of those who approached Jesus for healing, which lends support to the idea

he had a medical background. It is likely that Luke was the last Synoptic Gospel to be written, sometime around AD 70, from the city of Rome.

### BACKGROUND AND SETTING

Luke states at the beginning of his Gospel that he created his account for a person named Theophilus, whose name means “loved by God.” It is possible this refers to a wealthy and influential man who, according to second-century references, lived in the city of Antioch during the time of Luke. Another possibility is that Theophilus was a general title for those across the world who had chosen to follow Christ. Either way, it is clear Luke intended his Gospel to be read by *all people*. This is evidenced by the fact that even though he included many references to Jewish practices in Israel, he also focused on Jesus’ ministry to those in the Gentile world. Furthermore, Luke’s genealogy of Jesus traces Christ’s lineage not just to Abraham, the father of the Jewish people, but all the way back to Adam, the father of all peoples.

### KEY THEMES

Several key themes are prominent in Luke’s Gospel. The first is that *Jesus came with a message of salvation for all of humanity*. Luke relates that when Jesus returned to His hometown of Nazareth to begin His public ministry, He read from the prophet Isaiah and announced, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (4:21). In response, the people from His own village tried to end His life by throwing Him over a cliff. The story reflects Luke’s intent to show how Jesus *first* brought the good news of salvation to the Jewish people (who rejected it) and *then* to the entire world.

A second theme is that *Jesus had a heart for the marginalized in society*. When Jesus began His ministry in Nazareth, He also announced He had come to heal the sick and the brokenhearted and “set at liberty those who are oppressed” (4:18). Luke emphasizes in both Jesus’ teachings and miracles that He was concerned about those on the fringe of society—whether they

were despised tax collectors, widows in need, poor shepherds, or even sons in open rebellion toward God. Every person was important to Jesus and a candidate for salvation.

A third theme is that *Jesus operated through the power of the Holy Spirit*. Luke reports that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and, after His baptism (where the Holy Spirit descended over Him like a dove), was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit to be tempted. Jesus announced at the beginning of His ministry that “the Spirit of the LORD” was upon Him (4:18). Later, after Jesus’ resurrection, He told His disciples they could receive that same power and instructed them to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit (see 24:49).

A fourth theme is that *Jesus was fully divine but also fully human*. Luke refers twenty-five times to Jesus as the “Son of Man,” which is more than any other Gospel writer. His account of Jesus’ life begins in the most humble of situations—a manger surrounded by animals and lowly shepherds. Yet Luke also demonstrates that Jesus knew (even from an early age) that He was the divine Son of God who had come into the world to fulfill His heavenly Father’s plan of salvation. Luke’s Gospel is also unique in that it concludes with Jesus being taken up to heaven, where He is seated at the right hand of God (see Luke 24:51; Acts 7:56).

## KEY APPLICATIONS

Luke shows how Jesus came into this world “to *seek and to save* that which was lost” (19:10). He shows the high value Jesus places on rescuing *all people* from their sins—no matter how “far gone” those people might seem. And he shows how Jesus was willing to *give up His place in heaven* to come down to earth as a *sacrifice* for the sins of every person who will receive Him.

## LESSON *one*

# GOD WITH US

*Luke 1:1–2:52*

## GETTING STARTED

If you could ask one question of Mary, the mother of Jesus, what would it be?

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## SETTING THE STAGE

For thousands of years, humankind gazed at God. Glimpses of His majesty would occasionally shine through, flashing forth in the handiwork of His firmament. But the fullness of His glory was too sublime for human eyes. But then, Jesus came into the world to reveal the Father in heaven. Jesus was



God manifest in the flesh. God became human to tell us what He is like. God the Son became flesh to reveal God the Father. Christ is the image of God's person.

When you look at Jesus—when you see Him healing the sick and read of His compassion for the hungry, His concern for little children, His dealings with those who are demon-possessed, His flashing anger against hypocrisy, and His pardon for sinners—then you see God and understand what God is like.

You also get a sense of what God values by how He works through the people He chose to be a part of His salvation plan. For instance, in the opening chapters of Luke's Gospel, we meet an elderly couple, Zacharias and Elizabeth, who had long ago given up hope of ever having a child. We meet Mary, an unmarried young woman from a village that was belittled by most people. We also encounter Joseph, a simple carpenter from the same village.

Even the most astute students of the Law and Prophets could not have imagined that the Messianic prophecies would be fulfilled through people like *them*. Yet God saw something in them that no one else saw. He saw an obedient spirit and a willingness to sacrifice their own desires for something far greater.

## EXPLORING THE TEXT

### *John the Baptist's Birth Is Announced (Luke 1:5–25)*

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<sup>5</sup>There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. <sup>6</sup>And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. <sup>7</sup>But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years.

<sup>8</sup>So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, <sup>9</sup>according to the custom of the priesthood,

his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. <sup>10</sup> And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense. <sup>11</sup> Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. <sup>12</sup> And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

<sup>13</sup> But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. <sup>14</sup> And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. <sup>15</sup> For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. <sup>16</sup> And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. <sup>17</sup> He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

<sup>18</sup> And Zacharias said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years."

<sup>19</sup> And the angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings. <sup>20</sup> But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time."

<sup>21</sup> And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he lingered so long in the temple. <sup>22</sup> But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless.

<sup>23</sup> So it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house. <sup>24</sup> Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, <sup>25</sup> "Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people."

**1.** According to the angel, what would be the role of John, the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth (see verses 13–17)?

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**2.** What caused Zacharias to be struck mute? Why did God take this action (see verses 18–20)?

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### *Jesus' Birth Is Announced (Luke 1:26–45)*

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<sup>26</sup> Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!"

<sup>29</sup> But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. <sup>30</sup> Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. <sup>33</sup> And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

<sup>34</sup> Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"

<sup>35</sup> And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. <sup>36</sup> Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. <sup>37</sup> For with God nothing will be impossible."

<sup>38</sup> Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

<sup>39</sup> Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, <sup>40</sup> and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup> And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. <sup>42</sup> Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! <sup>43</sup> But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? <sup>44</sup> For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. <sup>45</sup> Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord."

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**3.** Virtually every Jewish woman longed to give birth to the Messiah. This honor was bestowed on Mary, an unmarried teenage girl from Nazareth. Most of what we know about Mary is found in this passage. What clues do you find that help explain why God chose her?

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**4.** How did Mary respond when she received the news from Gabriel that she would give birth to the Messiah (see verses 34, 38)? How was her reaction different from Zacharias's?

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### *The Birth of Jesus (Luke 2:1–20)*

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<sup>1</sup> And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup> This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. <sup>3</sup> So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, <sup>5</sup> to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. <sup>6</sup> So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. <sup>7</sup> And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

<sup>8</sup> Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. <sup>10</sup> Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. <sup>11</sup> For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup> And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."

<sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

<sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest,  
And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

<sup>15</sup> So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." <sup>16</sup> And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. <sup>17</sup> Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. <sup>18</sup> And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. <sup>19</sup> But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

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**5.** Micah prophesied the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (see 5:2). What events had to occur for this to take place (see Luke 2:1–4)?

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**6.** In first-century Israel, shepherds were generally considered lower class, and they represented the poor and humble. Given this, why do you think God chose a group of shepherds to be the first witnesses to the birth of Christ (see verses 8–16)?

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*Jesus Is Presented in the Temple (Luke 2:25–40)*

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<sup>25</sup> And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. <sup>26</sup> And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. <sup>27</sup> So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, <sup>28</sup> he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said:

<sup>29</sup> "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace,  
According to Your word;

<sup>30</sup> For my eyes have seen Your salvation

<sup>31</sup> Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,

<sup>32</sup> A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles,  
And the glory of Your people Israel."

<sup>33</sup> And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. <sup>34</sup> Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against <sup>35</sup> (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

<sup>36</sup> Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; <sup>37</sup> and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. <sup>38</sup> And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

<sup>39</sup> So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. <sup>40</sup> And

the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

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**7.** How does Luke describe Simeon (see verses 25–32)? How did Mary and Joseph react to Simeon’s words when he encountered Jesus (see verse 33)?

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**8.** Anna was a prophetess who likely lived in one of the rooms surrounding the temple. Why do you think Luke includes this story of her encounter with Jesus (see verses 36–38)?

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## REVIEWING THE STORY

According to Luke’s Gospel, Mary kept the extraordinary events surrounding Jesus’ birth and childhood “in her heart” (2:19, 51). Scholars believe that when Luke was gathering information for his Gospel, he turned to Mary as a source. At long last, Jesus’ mother had an opportunity to share her experience with the world, and the result is the most complete version of the Advent story ever recorded. In Luke’s opening chapters, he takes readers through everything from angelic visits to the miraculous pregnancies of Elizabeth and Mary, and from the events that led to Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem to His earliest visits to the temple.



**9.** How did the angel Gabriel announce the birth of John the Baptist to Zacharias (see Luke 1:8–12)? Why did Zacharias find this impossible to believe (see verse 18)?

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**10.** How do you think Mary's time with Elizabeth prepared her for the role she would fulfill in God's plan (see Luke 1:39–45)?

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**11.** Jesus is the “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Revelation 19:16), yet it is hard to conceive of a more lowly and humble birth into the world (see Luke 2:4–7). Why do you think God chose to orchestrate the events surrounding Jesus' birth in this way?

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**12.** What prophecy did Simeon give about Jesus in the temple (see Luke 2:34–35)?

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## APPLYING THE MESSAGE

**13.** God used an angel to communicate His will to Zacharias, Mary, and Joseph. What are some means that God uses to communicate His will to you?

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**14.** God rewarded the faithfulness of Simeon and Anna by allowing them to see the Messiah before they died. Aside from eternal life, what would be the most meaningful way that God could reward you for your faithful service?

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## REFLECTING ON THE MEANING

How did Mary respond to the news that God was getting ready to use her in an extraordinary way? Her first reaction was *confusion*. She likely had never seen an angel before . . . nor had ever expected to see one. His appearance was so out of the ordinary, so unbelievable to her, that her mind had trouble processing it.

Mary's second reaction was *consideration*. Luke writes that she "considered what manner of greeting this was" (1:29). She mentally played back what she had heard in the angel's words, searching them for meaning.

Her third reaction was *investigation*. After considering the matter, she posed a question to the angel who had announced that she was going to give birth: "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" (verse 34). Mary had every right to question what the angel had said, because this had never

happened before. Never had God created a body in a woman without the involvement of a man.

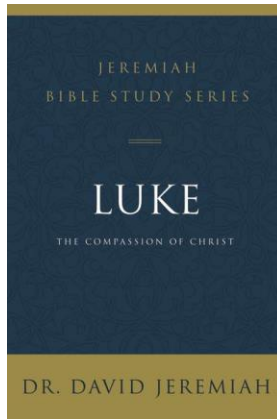
God accommodated Mary's questions. He gave Mary a miraculous precedent to which to cling. The angel revealed to Mary that her cousin Elizabeth, who had been barren her entire life and was well past her childbearing years, was also pregnant. Mary rushed to Elizabeth's house to confirm the news. She knew that if what the angel had said about Elizabeth was true, then certainly what he had said to her was also true.

This led to Mary's fourth reaction: *submission*. After visiting Elizabeth to confirm the angel's announcement, she likely wrestled with how to explain the situation to Joseph. Yet while she had few answers, she still humbly submitted to God's will. Mary also set an example for us to follow when we are confused or overwhelmed by the plan that God has laid out for us.

## JOURNALING YOUR RESPONSE

How would you respond if you received an unmistakable call from God to do something extraordinary—something way outside of your comfort zone?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



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