# The Book of Luke

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Unless otherwise noted, the ESV; capitalized will be used throughout.

Lesson 001: The Book of Luke  

I have been studying the Word of God since 1972, spending no less than an hour a day listening to the excellent teaching ministry of pastor-teacher R. B. Thieme, Jr. At some point, a few decades ago, I began studying on my own; and today, I study and write about the Bible 3–6 hours each day (this has been the case for the past two decades).


One of the things about the Bible which I find to be remarkable is the amount of narrative that there is. There are massive portions of Scripture where we follow one person or a few people around. Furthermore, it is rare for there to be any accompanying moral commentary. That is, we don’t read, Moses did A, B and C; and God was pleased with A and B; but when Moses did C, God was angry. Now and again, we will read some editorializing; but, for the most part, we simply read, Moses did A, B and C. We have to be careful when making moral judgments over what past saints have done. This does not mean that we cannot evaluate their actions; we simply have to be careful about that.

Nation Israel has a history, and it is often a mistake to begin our studies in the New Testament. God has laid a rich foundation for all that we study in the New Testament. In fact, God takes us all the way back to the beginning of mankind in the book of Genesis. Knowing what takes place in the Old Testament often gives us a depth of understanding when it comes to the New. If there had been no Old Testament, the New Testament would make little or no sense.

There is a very rich history of mankind concerning which we only have the most basic history. From man’s creation to his sin, to the corruption of almost all mankind, we have the barest recorded narrative—just the first 6 chapters of Genesis. After the judgment of God on the world known as the flood or the great deluge, we have another lengthy period of human history which is covered in only chapters 9–11 in Genesis. The period of time contain in Gen. 1–11 is often called The Gentile Dispensation (or words to that effect).
Around 2000 B.C., God spoke to a man named Abram, and told him to leave the place where he grew up and to move to Canaan in the far west. He was living in what is today modern Iraq and he moved eventually to the land partially occupied by modern Israel today. The Mediterranean Sea located as the western border of this special land. God told Abram that he would have a son and that there would come from this son a large group of people who are specially connected to God. In fact, there were several promises made by God to Abram concerning his progeny, and in our study of the book of Genesis, it is clear that God fulfilled those promises.

Abram was renamed Abraham; he had a son Isaac, and Isaac had a son Jacob. Two sets of great people came from these men. Whomever is descended from Abraham or Isaac, but not from Jacob, is an Arab. And anyone who is descended from Jacob is considered to be one of God’s people, set apart from the rest of the human race. These became a peculiar people to God, first known as the Hebrew people; and much later, known as the Jewish people. In the book of Genesis, we studied how carefully this people was isolated from all other groups. They could bring in women from other races and groups; but men, generally speaking, did not become a part of this people (there are notable exceptions to this). In any case, in the early days of the sons of Jacob, there was no intermarriage with any other family or group (with the exception of bringing women into the family).

Circumstances took all of Jacob’s descendants (and their wives and children) to Egypt, where they lived for 400 years. Also, during this time, they became slaves to Egypt. The book of Exodus is primarily about Moses, a Levite (Levi was Jacob’s third son), leading the people of God out of Egypt, as per God’s direction.

God will lead His people out of Egypt and into the desert-wilderness, where they will remain for 40 years. At the very beginning, God will give them the Ten Commandments and His national laws. However, the people will be resistant to entering the land given them by God and taking it. So God keeps them in the desert until that recalcitrant generation dies off. Then the next generation will enter into the land under the guidance of Joshua, and take it. The books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers describe Moses and the people of Israel—their leaving Egypt and spending 40 years in the desert—along with direct words from God as to their national laws.

In Deuteronomy, Moses speaks to the people of Israel—to the new, younger generation—and distills and explains their history to them. These are the people who were 20 years or younger when they left Egypt. “You have experienced this;” Moses will explain to them, and then he explains the significance of these experiences. Whereas, significant portions of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers are the direct words of God to Moses; nearly all of Deuteronomy are the direct words of Moses; and yet, his words are considered every bit as authoritative as those words spoken directly by God (early on, in the book of Luke, Jesus will quote authoritatively from Moses’ words in Deuteronomy).

In the book of Joshua, the people of Israel will take the land given them by God. In the second half of the book of Joshua, that land will be distributed to the various tribes.
After taking the land, Israel continues for several hundred years in this land and under the guidance of various judges. However, Israel will long for a king; so a monarchy is established under King Saul; whose reign is then followed by King David and finally King Solomon.

King Saul began as a great warrior and a decent king, but his leadership falls apart due to his rejection of God’s authority (in Samuel), jealousy (of David) and mental illness. David, from a different tribe, took the reigns of the kingdom after Saul and all of his sons died in battle. David is called a man after God’s Own heart, although he was clearly not a perfect man.

David’s son Solomon was one of the richest men in history (relatively speaking, as wealth is a relative measurement). Solomon ruled at a time when Israel enjoyed its greatest blessing. However, even though Solomon was known for his wisdom, his materialism and lust for women overcame him, and the nation Israel became two national entities after Solomon passed. In the north was the Northern Kingdom, also called Samaria, Ephraim or Israel. In the south was the Southern Kingdom, also called Judah or Judæa. The great kingdom of Israel—all of the land ruled over by David and Solomon—would never again to be reunited until the promise of the end-time Kingdom, under the reign of David’s Greater Son.

The two kingdoms to emerge from nation Israel were often at odds. The northern kingdom was in opposition to God so much that, in 721 B.C. they were overrun by the Assyrians, and many of them were moved to other lands in the east (when a people were conquered, it was common to lead the survivors away into another land and for them to function as slaves). This situation became known as the Assyrian captivity or the Assyrian exile. This was a result of their negative volition towards God and His Word. This removal of the Hebrew people from their land is called the 5th Cycle of Discipline by some; the 5th Stage of National Discipline by others.

Although the 10 tribes who lived there in the northern kingdom are often called the ten lost tribes, most of them continued still as separate tribes even into the New Testament. The tribes of Judah, Benjamin, Levi, and Asher are all named in the New Testament. That is, people in the New Testament knew that they belonged to this or that tribe. The line of Jesus (which we will study in Luke) reveals detailed birth records which appear to be superior to our own today. So, despite the diaspora, most Jews retained knowledge of their genealogy.

As an aside, even though Jews from the various tribes ended up in England (and all over the world), there is nothing legitimate in the concept of British-Israelism, which is the belief that, in some way, the people of Britain are "genetically, racially, and linguistically the direct descendants" of the Ten Lost Tribes of ancient Israel.

Great Britain, at one time, was the greatest nation in the world, and they ruled over perhaps a fifth of the entire inhabited world (it is quite amazing to see a map of the British Empire and to view tiny Great Britain on that map). Many recognized that this was clearly
blessing from God (which it was); but then some then came up with this false theory that, therefore, the people of Britain have inherited the blessings of Israel because they are Israel. Certainly, people descended from Israel had found respite in Great Britain; and there was, no doubt, some intermingling of the peoples. But, we know much of England’s history, and we know where their peoples came from, and it is not Israel (by which I don’t mean nation Israel but the people of Israel).

Speaking of which, let’s go back to ancient Israel again:

The Southern Kingdom was also filled with spiritual degeneration (called reversionism by some) and they were also overrun in 586 B.C., by Babylonia. Babylon removed the Jews from the land (this is from the southern kingdom) after defeating them. Removing a conquered people from their homeland was a common practice of that era.

Not long after, the Persian king, Cyrus the Great, defeated the Babylonian empire, and he inherited the Jewish people, with whom he developed a good relationship. Therefore, Cyrus soon decided to return the people of God to the land of promise, which occurred in 516 B.C. That was God giving the Jews another chance. However, Israel has not been an autonomous nation since then until most recently in 1947.

The last independent monarchs of Judah were Jeconiah (who ruled less than a year due to his degeneracy—an important topic that we will later take up in the book of Luke); and Zedekiah. Zedekiah was the final ruler of Judah, ruling about 11 years until 586 B.C., when Babylon conquered the southern kingdom.

The Jews remained in the southern kingdom from 516 B.C. until A.D. 70. The Old Testament was completed around 400 B.C. There continued to be writings by various Jewish men, but what is accepted as authoritative begins with Genesis go as far as the final chapters of Chronicles (the final book in the Hebrew Bible).

The period of time between the testaments, between 400 B.C. (the end of the writing of the Old Testament) and A.D. 25 (the public ministry of John the Herald), is known as the intertestamental period. For about 400 years, there was no word from God; until various people were spoken to around 6–4 B.C. (the time of the births of John the Baptist and Jesus). Since God did not speak to anyone, no Scripture was recorded—as Scripture is basically the history of man and God. Stuff was going on and God was on His throne; but there was no direct communication taking place between God and the people of Israel. They had a complete canon of Scripture—up to that point in time (which we call the Old Testament). All of these books looked forward to the coming of a Messiah/King/Prophet to come.

Between the last verse of the Old Testament and the first few verses of the book of Luke, there are 400 silent years. There is no Scripture written during that time. There are books written by believers (I assume that they are believers) known as the apocrypha, but those books have been rejected for theological and historical inaccuracies (the Catholic religion

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1 John the Herald; often called John the baptist.
accepts them as divinely inspired). This does not mean that these books are not helpful to fill in historical gaps, but they must be taken with a grain of salt, just like any other historical record which is not divinely inspired.

Got Questions is a pretty good source for accurate information. So I will let them tell what happened in between the two testaments.

The Intertestamental Period (by Got Questions?)

Israel was under the control of the Persian Empire about 532–332 BC. The Persians allowed the Jews to practice their religion with little interference. They were even allowed to rebuild and worship at the temple (2Chronicles 36:22–23; Ezra 1:1–4). This span of time included the last 100 years of the Old Testament period and about the first 100 years of the intertestamental period. This time of relative peace and contentment was just the calm before the storm.

Prior to the intertestamental period, Alexander the Great defeated Darius of Persia, bringing Greek rule to the world. Alexander was a student of Aristotle and was well-educated in Greek philosophy and politics. Alexander required that Greek culture be promoted in every land that he conquered. As a result, the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek, becoming the translation known as the Septuagint. Most of the New Testament references to Old Testament Scripture use the Septuagint phrasing. Alexander did allow religious freedom for the Jews, though he still strongly promoted Greek lifestyles. This was not a good turn of events for Israel, since the Greek culture was very worldly, humanistic, and ungodly.

After Alexander died, Judea was ruled by a series of successors, culminating in the Selucid king Antiochus Epiphanes. Antiochus did far more than refuse religious freedom to the Jews. Around 167 BC, he overthrew the rightful line of the priesthood and desecrated the temple, defiling it with unclean animals and a pagan altar (see Mark 13:14 for a similar event to take place in the future). Antiochus' act was the religious equivalent of rape. Eventually, Jewish resistance to Antiochus, led by Judas Maccabeus and the Hasmoneans, restored the rightful priests and rescued the temple. The period of the Maccabean Revolt was one of war, violence, and infighting.

Around 63 BC, Pompey of Rome conquered Israel, putting all of Judea under control of the Caesars. This eventually led to Herod being made king of Judea by the Roman emperor and senate. This is the nation that taxed and controlled the Jews and eventually executed the Messiah on a Roman cross. Roman, Greek, and Hebrew cultures were now mixed together in Judea.
During the span of the Greek and Roman occupations, two important political/religious groups emerged in Israel. The Pharisees added to the Law of Moses through oral tradition and eventually considered their own laws more important than God's (see Mark 7:1–23). While Christ's teachings often agreed with the Pharisees, He railed against their hollow legalism and lack of compassion. The Sadducees represented the aristocrats and the wealthy. The Sadducees, who wielded power through the Sanhedrin, rejected all but the Mosaic books of the Old Testament. They refused to believe in resurrection and were generally shadows of the Greeks, whom they greatly admired.

James Allen provides a more thorough examination of this history of the Jewish people here (it is in outline form).

At the time of the New Testament, Israel is ruled over by Rome as a part of the Roman empire.

One fundamental purpose of the Old Testament was to set up the concept of a Messiah, Who would come and deliver the Hebrew people. He is known by many names in the Old Testament: the Seed of the Woman, the Messiah, the King of kings, David’s Greater Son, the Suffering Servant.

Jesus is revealed in the Old Testament in two principle ways: (1) By direct prophecy (examples: Gen. 49:10  2Sam. 7:16  Psalm 2:6–9  110:1–7  Isa. 7:14  9:6–7). The Jewish people themselves and their theologians understood these passages to speak of their Messiah. (2) Though typology.

Regarding prophecy, many of the passages about the Messiah are spoken by God directly to the writer of Scripture (Gen. 3:15  Isa. 7:14  9:6²). I don't believe that most of these passages were fully understood when written; but there did seem to develop an understanding that certain specific passages were about the Messiah. The religious class appeared to be obsessed with the Law; but less discerning when it came to the Jewish Messiah.

Typology is where a person, an institution, or an event is understood after the first advent, to represent or point to Jesus Christ (or to His work on the cross). A type may mean one thing when originally written; but come to mean something different with the passage of time. Abraham, Moses and David are all types of Christ. Long after the fact, we are able to see what is recorded about their lives; and we are able to connect these things to a

² Isa. 9:6 appears to continue a quotation from God begun back in Isa. 8).
plethora of parallels that even the human authors of Old Testament Scripture did not recognize. Generally speaking, when a typological event occurs (or an institution is presented), the writer who records this event (institution or person) has no idea that he is writing about the Messiah (or about some aspect of the Messiah).

The priesthood is an institution established by God with a set of specific purposes in the Old Testament. However, in retrospect, it is clear that the priesthood—and specifically the office of the High Priest—is representative of the Lord Jesus Christ. God knew this; but when Moses wrote down all of what God had to say about the priesthood, he never thought to himself, “Aha, God is talking about the Messiah here.” The various high priests never thought, in the midst of a service, “Wow, I am a representation of the Messiah to come.”

Typology is mentioned in the New Testament, but, like many other doctrines of the faith, was not fully developed in the 1st century. Quite frankly, today, we know much more about typology than Paul, Peter or the writer of the book of Hebrews.

Typological passages Psalm 22 and Isa. 53 both speak of actual historical events of great suffering—the precise details of those events (who, what, where) are lost to us. However, those two passages provide us with great insight as to what Jesus did for us on the cross. Psalm 22 tells us about His actual physical suffering; and Isa. 53 speaks of the theological nature of what Jesus did for us on the cross.

One example that we will study below is God ordering Abraham to offer up his beloved son as a sacrifice to God. At the time, this is presented simply as an act of great obedience and trust on the part of Abraham. God told Abraham to do something, and Abraham just went ahead and did it (almost). However, in retrospect, this act is clearly all about God the Father offering up His Beloved Son for our sins.

Current Judaism has the problem that, at the heart of their Scriptures is the promise of a Savior-Messiah. They have, for the most part, set that part of their Scriptures aside, along with their complex system of rituals, all of which reveal this Savior-Messiah. Their problem today is, their Messiah came to them, and they rejected Him, hanging Him on the cross as a trouble-maker, despite being unable to find anything wrong that He did.

What I would like to do in this lesson, is briefly go through a few Old Testament passages and explain some of the places where Jesus is revealed. My emphasis will be upon the Old Testament Scriptures, without spending much time in the New Testament. The point being, the Old Testament is a solid foundation for the New. The list that follows is representative, not exhaustive.

**The Seed of the Woman:**

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3 Hebrew theologians have various ways of interpreting the Messianic passages; but most do not understand them in the same way that their forefathers did.

4 The Jews did not directly hang the Lord on the cross; but they manipulated the Romans and Pontius Pilate so that Jesus—the most innocent man Who has ever lived—would die a most horrific death.
The first time that the Savior is revealed is back in Gen. 3:15, which is known as the proto-evangel. The serpent has tempted the woman, and she has dis obeyed God and eaten from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When Adam returned home, he looked at the woman, the partially eaten fruit, and he chose to eat the fruit that she handed to him. The woman had been deceived, but Adam ate the fruit, knowing full well that he was disobeying the one explicit negative command of God.

Both Adam and the woman also suddenly realized that they were naked and covered themselves up with fig leaves. When God came to the garden to speak to them, they hid themselves, guilty for their transgression. Through interrogation, God found out that the woman ate the fruit because she had been deceived by the serpent; and Adam ate the fruit that his wife gave him to eat. The woman acted, in part, out of ignorance having been deceived; but Adam knew that he was disobeying God.

God pronounced judgement upon the man, the woman and the serpent, but one verse in particular stands out.

The Revealed God is speaking to the serpent, announcing its judgment:

Gen. 3:15  I will put enmity between you [the serpent] and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring [lit., between your seed and her seed]; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." (ESV; capitalized; which is the translation which I will use throughout this lesson, unless otherwise noted).

Throughout human history, it is the man who provides the seed. This is his contribution to any child who is born; yet, God speaks of the woman’s seed here (Who is Jesus Christ). What will Jesus do? He would bruise the head of the serpent. That is a deathblow to serpent, also known as Satan. Jesus would completely crush the serpent. The serpent would bruise the heel of Jesus (that is, the Seed of the Woman). This means, the serpent would harm Jesus—enough to knock Him off His feet, so to speak; but this would not be a permanent deathblow.

We understand today that the sins of all mankind would be poured out upon Jesus and He would take upon Himself our judgment. His death on the cross is the bruise to His heel. The Seed of the Woman would be off His feet, but only for a limited time.

After judgment was pronounced, then God did something very interesting for Adam and the woman:

Gen. 3:21  And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

This does not mean that God looked at the clothing that Adam and the woman had quickly devised and said, “Look, those are some very sad threads. Let Me show you how clothing should be done.” This was not about fashion; it was about temporarily providing a covering for the man and woman (the verb to make atonement for means to cover over). Adam and
the woman needed to be given a temporary covering. They needed to be atoned for. This gave them respite from the judgment of God, which they deserved.

God did something that Adam and the woman had never seen done before—God killed an animal and then made leather clothing from the skins of the animal. The sacrificed animal represents Jesus and the leather clothing that God made temporarily covered Adam and the woman, protecting them from judgment.

This sacrifice of animals—the innocent on behalf of the guilty—is a theme which runs throughout the Old Testament. It started as far back as Gen. 3; right after Adam and the woman had sinned.

The Genealogy Gospel:

This is the list of names of those descended from Adam to Noah, found in Gen. 5. The names and their meanings are given.

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<td>Man</td>
<td>Man (is) appointed mortal sorrow; (but) the Blessed God shall come down teaching (that) His death shall bring (the) despairing rest.</td>
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<td>Seth</td>
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<td>Enosh</td>
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<td>Kenan</td>
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<td>Mahalalel</td>
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<td>Jared</td>
<td>Shall come down</td>
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<td>Enoch</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>As you can see, the gospel message is hidden in the names.</td>
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<td>Methuselah</td>
<td>His death shall bring</td>
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<td>Lamech</td>
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<td>Noah</td>
<td>Rest, or comfort.</td>
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I took this from Chuck Missler (accessed December 7, 2018). Missler goes into much greater detail at that link. Many people have presented this gospel in this way; so I don’t believe that it is original with him.

Animal Sacrifices by Noah:

When Noah exited the ark with his family after the great flood, he offered up animal sacrifices from the clean animals (he took extras of those into the ark).
Gen. 8:20  Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

Noah offered up animals in sacrifice to God. These were burnt on an altar with fire. The fire speaks of judgment and the sacrifice of animals represents the sacrifice of the just for the unjust.

Gen. 8:21a  And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man..."

God was pleased with the aroma of the animal sacrifice, which means that God is temporarily placated by the animal sacrifice, which are representative of the cross. He is pleased with the animal sacrifice. The animal sacrifice provides a temporary stay of execution.

When God gave the Hebrew people the Law, included in the Law was a set of animal sacrifices which the people were to participate in. By the time a person was old, he had seen hundreds upon hundreds of animals offered up for his sins. However, since these sacrifices continue for all his life, he would know that they were not actually effectual for the taking away of sin.

Abraham Offers Up His Son Isaac as a Type of Jesus Offering Himself for Our Sins:

In Gen. 22, God did something quite remarkable—He told Abraham to take the son whom he loved and to offer him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that God would designate. Not before or since has God required that anyone offer up any human sacrifice, and yet here, that is exactly what He was doing.

This was a 3-day trip to get to the mountain; and on the trip, Abraham was cognizant of who was to be offered up; but his son, Isaac, was not. They traveled with two servants and many believe that they went to the mountain that would later be associated with Jerusalem and the cross (called Mount Moriah).

Then we read words which are unlike anything else in the Bible:

Gen.22:9–10  Then they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.

But Abraham is stopped by God. Then Abraham sees that there is a ram stuck in a thicket and that ram is offered up instead of Isaac.

For Abraham and Hebrew readers of the Old Testament, this has always been understood to be an act of great obedience and trust on the part of Abraham. However, after Jesus had been offered on the cross as God’s only begotten Son Whom God greatly loved, it is
clear that Isaac was a type of Christ being offered up. The ram illustrates the substitutionary element of this event.

**Joseph as a Type of Christ:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Joseph as a Type of Christ</th>
<th>Jesus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joseph was Loved by His Father. Genesis 37:3</td>
<td>God said about Jesus &quot;This is My beloved Son.&quot; Matthew 3:17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph's brothers did not believe him and they hated him. Genesis 37:4-5</td>
<td>The Jews Did Not Believe in Christ (John 7:5) and they hated Him (John 15:24).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph's brothers rejected the idea that he would rule over them. Genesis 37:8</td>
<td>The Jewish leaders said &quot;we will not have this Man to rule over us.&quot; Luke 19:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph's brothers conspired against him. Genesis 37:23</td>
<td>The religious types took counsel against Jesus. Matthew 27:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They stripped Joseph of his garment (his cloak of authority). Genesis 37:23</td>
<td>They stripped Jesus (Matthew 27:28); also, Jesus divested Himself of access to His Deity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph was sold for silver. Genesis 37:28</td>
<td>Jesus was sold for silver. Matthew 26:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everything Joseph put his hand to prospered. Genesis 39:3</td>
<td>&quot;... And the pleasure of the Lord prospered in his hand.&quot; Isaiah 53:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All things were laid into Joseph's trust. Genesis 39:4-8</td>
<td>God has given all things into His hand. John 3:35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph's own brothers did not recognize him.</td>
<td>The Jews did not recognize their Messiah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph was tempted and did not sin. Genesis 39:9</td>
<td>Jesus was tempted in all things yet was without sin. Hebrews 4:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph was bound. Genesis 39:30</td>
<td>Jesus was bound. Matthew 27:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph was condemned with two criminals. Genesis 40:2, 3</td>
<td>Jesus was crucified with two criminals. Luke 23:32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One criminal was given life and the other was condemned. Genesis 40:21-22</td>
<td>Jesus told one of the criminals &quot;Today you shall be with Me in paradise.&quot; Luke 23:43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph was trustworthy and wise. Genesis 41:39</td>
<td>God said about Jesus &quot;this is My beloved Son in Whom I well pleased.&quot; Mark 1:11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph's brothers bowed their knee to him. Genesis 41:43</td>
<td>&quot;At the name of Jesus every knee will bow.&quot; Philippians 2:10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joseph was 30 years old. Genesis 41:46</td>
<td>Jesus was &quot;about 30 years old.&quot; Luke 3:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God planned the suffering of Joseph in advance to save many. Genesis 50:21</td>
<td>Jesus said &quot;God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him shall be saved.&quot; John 3:16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph was made ruler over all of Egypt. Genesis 41:42-44</td>
<td>Jesus said &quot;all power has been given unto Me.&quot; Matt. 28:18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph married a foreign bride who shared his glory. Genesis 41:45</td>
<td>Believers in Christ are &quot;joint heirs&quot; with Him in his glory (Romans 8:17). Throughout the NT, the Church (and not Israel) is called the bride of Christ (2Cor. 11:2 Eph. 5:25–27).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph was cast into a pit and then later delivered out of it. Genesis 37:24, 28</td>
<td>When Jesus died he descended into the lower parts of the earth, and later ascended into heaven. Ephesians 4:9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph was imprisoned based on false charges. Genesis 39:19, 20</td>
<td>During the trial of Jesus false witnesses were brought in testifying against Him. Mark 14:56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph's brothers later repented for what they did to him. Genesis 42:7</td>
<td>&quot;and they shall look upon Me Whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn.&quot; Zechariah 12:10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Such a set of comparisons could have been developed between Abraham and Christ, Isaac and Christ, Moses and Christ, etc. The parallels in every case are remarkable.

Like all types, Joseph did not know that he was a type of Christ; nor did the people of Israel recognize that Joseph was a type of Christ. No ancient Jewish theologian ever pointed to the life of Joseph and exclaim, "Herein, we find the Messiah!"

From https://www.bible-history.com/old-testament/types-joseph.html (Bible History online); accessed December 28, 2018 (edited). A similar list is found on the Jews for Jesus site.

### The Passover and the Death of the Firstborn:

In the book of Exodus, Moses had gone before Pharaoh (the king of Egypt) requesting that the people of God, the Hebrew people (those descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) be allowed to go out from Egypt in order to worship their God. Pharaoh was obstinate about this and refused to let them go. Each time Moses asked and Pharaoh refused, God sent another plague to Egypt. The final plague was the death of the firstborn. Moses gave this warning:
Exodus 11:4–6  So Moses said, "Thus says the LORD: 'About midnight I will go out in the midst of Egypt, and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the cattle. There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor ever will be again."

There would be one way only to keep the firstborn from being killed in any particular house. Each household was to offer up a lamb sacrifice.

Exodus 12:5–6  [God is speaking, giving Moses the directions] “Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight. Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it.”

The lamb to be offered represents Jesus Christ dying for our sins. It must be a lamb without blemish (as Jesus was without sin). When the time was right, “and then the entire assembly of the congregation of Israel is to slaughter it [lit., Him] at twilight.” (ISV). The literal translation of the Hebrew is even more striking: And you [all] will slaughter him—all of the assembly of a congregation of Israel—between the evenings. The literal rendering of this verse is quite remarkable, as, when Jesus died on the cross, the entire congregation of Israel seemed to rise up to slaughter Him.

Blood from that lamb would be painted on the side posts of the door and at the top of the doorframe (the blood from the top would have dripped down). The blood on the doorframe would match the blood of the Lord coming from His head, hands, and feet during the crucifixion.

The Passover Door (a graphic); from Blue Stocking Red Neck; accessed December 7, 2018.

Every household which applied the blood of the lamb to the door saved their household. The households which ignored this requirement saw their firstborn die that night. There were no restrictions here; anyone—Israel or Egyptian—could have done this in order to preserve their family. And all of those who didn’t, lost their firstborn.

5 The original Hebrew reads the entire congregation of Israel slaughters Him.
Waters from the Rock at Horeb:

In Exodus 17, there is a fascinating record of the people complaining to Moses of their thirst, accusing him of taking them out to the desert to kill them. Moses, upset, goes to the Lord with this problem.

Exodus 17:4 So Moses cried to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me."

Moses was reasonably afraid for his own life.

Exodus 17:5 And the LORD said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.

God tells him to go before the people, taking some elders with him and the staff which he used to strike the Nile (it was with this staff that Moses turned the waters to blood, a sign of judgment upon Egypt).

Exodus 17:6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.

The word *behold* is a form of the word, *to see*; and God is telling Moses that he will see God on the rock at Horeb. Moses is to strike the rock with his staff—and God is on that rock, so Moses is very nearly striking God.

Living waters, the water of life, will come forth from that rock and give the people the water which will preserve them.

The Rock is Christ; striking the rock is the judgment of God upon Jesus; and out from Him will flow living waters, the water of life. If we drink of Him, we will never thirst again.

John 4:7–8 A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) John 4:9 The Samaritan woman said to Him, "How is it that You, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) John 4:10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and Who it is that is saying to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." John 4:13–14 Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

The Ark of God:
One of the most holy and revered objects designed by God is the Ark (also known as the Ark of God or the Ark of the Covenant—described in Exodus 25: 37). The Ark represents Jesus Christ. It is made out of acacia wood, overlain with gold. The wood represents the humanity of Jesus and the gold His Deity.

No one could touch the Ark; actual contact with the Ark would result in immediate death. Mortal man cannot come into direct contact with the holiness of God. God is too holy and man is sinful.

In or beside the Ark were 3 objects: the Law of Moses; Aaron’s rod that budded; and the pot of manna. The Law of Moses represents our condemnation; as we are unable to keep the law. Aaron’s rod that budded represents resurrection; as all believers will rise again. The pot of manna is God’s provision for each and every believer in life (also known as, logistical grace).

On the great day of atonement, the High Priest entered into the Holy of Holies (a room within the Tabernacle and later within the Temple). No one was allowed in this room and all that was found in this room is the Ark of God and some items built specifically for the Ark. Once a year, the High Priest would enter into this room with blood from a sacrifice, and some of that blood would be sprinkled on the Mercy Seat, which sat upon the Ark (there are also two carved angels overlooking the Mercy Seat). The blood on the Mercy Seat represents Jesus dying for our sins on the cross; and the two angels represent the Angelic Conflict; the fallen and elect angel who watch mankind during our time in history. A description of the Ark can be found in Exodus 25:10–28 and Heb. 9:1–5. The activities of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement are found in Lev. 16:15–17.

“A Prophet Like Unto Me”:

Moses, when speaking to the people of Israel, before they were to come into the land, said this:

Deuteronomy 18:15 [Moses is speaking] "The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to Him you shall listen—..."

This prophet, who was to be raised up from among the people, would be Jesus. He would be a prophet like Moses, inasmuch as He would have that great authority that Moses had.

The Kinsman Redeemer:

In the book of Ruth, Ruth is a Moabite woman married to an Israelite man who dies before they have children. She chooses to ally herself with the Hebrew people and goes to live in Israel with her mother-in-law.

There is a tradition in the ancient world that, a near relative can marry Ruth and raise up a child to perpetuate the name of her late husband. Such a man is known as a kinsman-
redeemer. The kinsman means that he is a near relative and redeemer means that he, by raising up a child, redeems the name of the past husband.

Ruth married her kinsman-redeemer, a very successful man named Boaz; and from them came Obed, who fathered Jesse who fathered David (who would be king over Israel).

The parallel is, Jesus is our Kinsman, inasmuch as He is a man as we are. And He has redeemed us from sin (that is, He has paid for our sins).

These are but a handful of illustrations, types and prophecies concerning the Lord Jesus Christ found in the first 8 books of the Old Testament. There are many, many others throughout Scripture. I simply wanted to include enough to show that, Jesus is revealed in the Old Testament in many, many ways. All of this foreshadowing is certainly foundational to the revelation of the New Testament. At the heart of the Jewish faith has been the Law of Moses (which tells us that we have sinned), the special relationship between God and the people of Jacob, and the Messiah-Savior.

Modern-day Israel is a great and wonderful nation. But, modern-day Judaism lacks most of its founding principles. That is because the Old Testament is not the foundation for Judaism but for Christianity (that is a very profound statement, by the way; about which book could easily be written).

Lessons 004–005: Introduction to Luke Canonicity and Inspiration

Before we move any further along in this study, allow me to personally encourage you to focus upon the process and the study of each verse and each lesson, rather than being overly concerned about completing the book of Luke. It is a great feeling to go all the way through a book in the Bible and to understand most of it. But, that can be a long journey, depending upon the book itself. Luke is quite a long biography of the Lord.

When I was younger, my family took a trip from California to Ohio by train. That trip, which took around 3 days, was an adventure in itself. We saw beautiful landscapes, met interesting people, and had a fascinating ride. This trip was every bit as important as arriving in Ohio and doing what families do once we got there.

The same will be true of this study of Lukian biography of Jesus. Enjoy the journey; do not focus on the completion of this study, as I have not even the slightest idea how many lessons will be involved. My intention is to thoroughly study this particular book, yet being mindful not to get bogged down. Also, there will be a few instances where we examine at specific biographical incidents in more detail than what Luke does (I can only think of 2 or 3 incidents where I would like to do this). There are also sections of Luke which lend themselves to extremely important doctrines for the believer.

The LXX (the Septuagint) and the preservation of Scripture:
There is a very important event which takes place during this Intertestamental period: the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek. The world, at that time, was speaking more and more Greek (because of the conquests of Alexander the Great). The Jews were finding themselves spread throughout Alexander’s kingdom; and increasingly, more of them spoke Greek and fewer of them spoke Hebrew. At some point, it became clear that the Jewish people needed their Scriptures written in the Greek language rather than in Hebrew, which was becoming somewhat of a dead language.

Translating the authoritative books required that they actually determine the inspired (or authoritative) texts of the Old Testament. No one was going to translate just any Hebrew writing and throw it into the canon of Scripture; but we actually do not know what steps were taken to determine the proper texts, what texts were used, or if anyone really understood what it meant for the text to be inspired. Was this list of books already known and agreed upon?

Deuteronomy is a very significant book regarding the topic of inspiration as almost everything in this book was written by the man Moses and not quoted from God. Yet, this book has, from the very beginning, taken to be authoritative—every bit as authoritative as portions of Exodus which read, *Thus saith the Lord*. It is quite remarkable for Deuteronomy to be seen like that, but it seemed to be a natural acceptance. Interestingly enough, the acceptance of Deuteronomy as authoritative, to the best of my knowledge, was never really discussed theologically—not in the Hebrew writings, anyway. I am not aware of any rabbis who found the acceptance of Deuteronomy as being authoritative to be a remarkable thing. By the time they got around to writing commentaries and opinions, the authoritative nature of Deuteronomy was a given.

During this time period between the testaments, the canon of Scripture for the Old Testament was settled. We do not have any idea how exactly this happened. People just accepted certain books as being authoritative. I am unaware of anyone writing any deep dissertation at that point in time about what it meant for writings to be inspired by God nor do we have lists of the authoritative books developed by this or that group. Just, somehow, certain books were accepted as being authoritative; and these are the books which were read in the synagogues. It is these books that would be translated into other languages, as the Jews were dispersed throughout the world at this time. The Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint or the LXX, was common and in use during the time of our Lord (it was often quoted from directly by the disciples), and most guess the translation to be made around 200 B.C.

**People speaking Greek; people speaking English:** Because of Alexander the Great, the great conqueror, koine Greek became the universal language; and most everyone spoke that language (just as many people today speak English).

People throughout the world speak English today for two reasons: the famed British Empire and the United States. The British Empire was established by Great Britain, where they went all over the world and conquered various lands, bringing to these lands the gospel of Jesus Christ, law and order, and the English language. As Great Britain became less
devoted to the Word of God, its kingdom began to diminish. However, the United States stepped into Britain’s place. Although we do not have conquered lands all over the world as the Brits did, we have economic, military and cultural influence—but more important than those, we have a spiritual influence on the rest of the world. This is because the gospel of Jesus Christ, taken abroad by thousands of missionaries from the United States, who have been in virtually every country of the world. Because of WWII, we also have air bases and military bases all over the world.

Generally speaking, it is United States policy to protect our citizens all over the world, whether they be tourists or missionaries.

People who are 20 years or more younger than me do not appreciate the influence of the United States throughout the world. In my teens, it was almost an accepted fact that, at some point, WWIII would happen—probably between the free nations and the communist nations. However, that cold war only heated up on a limited number of fronts, and it was nearly always confined to relatively small geographical areas.

As long as the United States continues to send out missionaries, we can rest assured that our economic and political power will remain strong and influential all over the world. But, if we turn toward human solutions and away from the gospel, our power and influence throughout the world will disappear, just as it did for Great Britain. Either some other nation will step up (like South Korea) and take our place in the world, or the world will become a battleground of a hundred warring nations again.

Back to the LXX:

When it comes to the canonicity of the New Testament, we understand the issues which were brought up and what made a book a part of the canon; but we do not have a similar set of criterion for the Old (that we are aware of). The scribes continued to preserve the Hebrew manuscripts and this Greek translation provided another witness to which books were understood to be canonical.

The Hebrew manuscripts and the manuscripts of this new Greek translation were both preserved, but by different groups of people. The Jewish scribes continued to preserve the Hebrew Old Testament; and the Christians preserved the Greek translation of the Old Testament. There were also other ancient translations which were made, and all of them act as sort of a cross-check. Both Testaments were translated into Latin, Syriac (also know as Aramaean) and Arabic. Each translation was preserved by a different groups of men in a variety of nations subject to a variety of cultures.

By preserved, I mean that copies of the manuscripts were made on regular intervals, with various checks in place to insure the accuracy of the text. In most cases, when new manuscripts had been completed, the old ones were thrown away—often burned or completely destroyed. But, bear in mind, there is all this possible cross-checking which
took place, attempting to insure that the copies are accurate. Old manuscripts could not be easily handled or read after a time, so they were not just discarded, but destroyed.

Today, I can place a Latin manuscript next to an Aramaic manuscript next to a Hebrew manuscript (and we have internet access to most of these), and easily compare them for differences in order to determine the most accurate text. What is remarkable is, the text is very consistent. If I was required to use Saint Jerome’s Latin manuscripts as my starting text, I would be teaching the exact same thing as if I chose the Greek texts instead. There is no Roman Jesus, Arabic Jesus or Greek Jesus. It is not that case that each tradition is infested with the customs and culture of that particular language and people.

As an aside, so that there is not confusion, let me point out that, the text of the original Hebrew manuscripts is the text which is God-breathed. On the one hand, we have copies of copies of copies of those original manuscripts; but these ancient manuscripts in other languages, preserved by other peoples, serve as a check on our current Hebrew manuscripts. My point is, is I could use the Latin OT as my fundamental text, and the teaching which came from that would be virtually identical to teaching from the original Hebrew text.

What we would expect is, one group would begin to modify the text, to suit their cherished beliefs and traditions, but that did not happen. There are differences in all of these manuscripts, but they are not, for the most part, substantive differences. There are in existence many English Bibles which are translated from different origins: some come from the original Hebrew and Greek transcripts; some were translated from the Aramaic; and some were translated from the Latin manuscripts (if you use e-sword, you can have English texts which were translated from any one of those specific languages).

Now, if you were given some random English translation of the Old Testament, without you knowing its origin, you would be unable to say, “I know that this came from the Greek translation, because of all the Greek references and Greek ideas which have clearly crept into the text.” You simply would not be able to distinguish one from the other, unless you were particularly scholarly in this specific area. The reason is, there are no Greek images, references or ideas in the Greek translation; just as there are no specific Roman ideas, images or references to be found in the Latin manuscripts. They are not perfectly in synch with one another; but their differences are insignificant. There are some very serious problems with the Catholic church today; but none of these can be blamed on Saint Jerome, who translated the Bible into Latin (the common language of his day) around A.D. 400. He did an excellent translation from the Hebrew into the Latin.

My point here is, we know that the text of the original Hebrew has been preserved, because at least 4 or 5 groups preserved parallel texts in different languages. For instance, first the scribes and later the Masoretes preserved the Hebrew texts. The early church preserved the Greek manuscripts. The Catholic church—which became quite corrupt as it consolidated religious and political power—still preserved accurate Latin texts. Now, we can take these texts and examine them side-by-side, and see that there is very little difference between them. No matter which group we are speaking of, they clearly had
a reverence for the text before them and therefore did not attempt to corrupt it with their contemporary cultural influences.

There are some very specific linguistic differences and let me explain one particular difference, by way of illustration. In the Hebrew, when speaking of a man’s face, a plural verb is used, because Hebrew people understood the face to be a collection of physical features. We in the English use the singular noun face. So, there are times when a noun is plural in one language yet singular in another—the correct number simply suits the language being used. So, when I am reading an English translation and come across the phrase the face of Moses, and then I check the Hebrew and find that it literally reads, the faces of Moses, I don’t suddenly conclude that Moses originally had two or more heads. I understand that the English and the Hebrew are different in that respect.

Similarly, definite articles are used in different ways. So, whereas the God is commonly found in the Greek; we rarely say the God in the English. God is just God. He is not more fully God in English by throwing the definite article the in front of it. So, most of the differences between the ancient manuscripts preserved in those ancient languages are matters of how the language was used. There is no meaningful difference between the God in the Greek; and God as we use it in the English. Interestingly enough, it is just the opposite with the word for Lord. In the English, we always use the definite article before the word Lord (unless He is being directly addressed); but the Greek almost never uses the definite article before Lord. There are probably more of these sorts of linguistic differences between ancient manuscripts than any other category of difference. One language uses words in one way; another language uses those same words, but slightly differently. So, these kinds of differences are found when comparing Hebrew to Latin to Greek manuscripts/translations.

You may be surprised, but the oldest complete and nearly complete Hebrew manuscripts that we have of the Old Testament goes back to A.D. 1008, the Leningrad Codex (there are earlier Hebrew manuscripts, but they are not complete—for instance, the Cairo Codex—A.D. 895—has the prophets). Ancient, hand-copied Old Testament manuscripts of any significant size are quite rare, and that is because old manuscripts would be copied and then destroyed. This is because when a set of manuscripts became old and difficult to read, they would be copied; and the old manuscript would be purposely destroyed. But these witnesses by other groups of preservationists preserving these same manuscripts, but in a different language, act as a check on what we have.

When it comes to ancient manuscripts, there is a very significant witness. We have partial set of manuscripts known as the Dead Sea Scrolls which was a very ancient library. These scrolls date back to 100 B.C. (or earlier) and include Greek translations of the Old Testament (no manuscript is complete, due to the flimsy nature of the 2000 year old manuscripts). These were discovered around 1947 and various manuscripts continued to be unearthed for the next several years. As a result, we have manuscripts 1100 years older than our oldest manuscripts. Yet, the differences are trivial. As time passes, things

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6 Not exactly the same as we think of them.
are spelled differently. As time passes, grammar changes (even in a rarely used language). So these changes would be reflected when comparing the Dead Sea Scrolls to the manuscripts which are from the 12th century; but substantive differences are rare. Furthermore, substantive differences which actually may change or modify a doctrine are virtually non-existent.

I have translated about the first third of the Old Testament word-by-word and I have come across one serious substantive error. If memory serves, Saul asks for the Ark to be brought to him; but it should have been the *ephod* that he asked for (he wanted to know some information that he could trust). These two words in the Hebrew are not much different. So, some scribe erred and accidentally wrote *ark* when he should have written *ephod*. That is the biggest, most significant problem that I observed in the first third of the entire Old Testament. This is one of the very few times when context and logic force me to say, “The word here should be *ephod*, not *ark*.” For the average person, this does not stand out as a substantive difference; but if you know what these things are, then it is. However, this substantive difference does not cause me to panic and think, “I need to go back and rework the doctrine of the Ephod; this changes everything!” Even with that error, there are no changes to be made in discussions of the Ark or the Ephod.

One of the reasons that we can be so certain of the text and what it means is, a huge amount of the Bible is narrative. I have never sat down to consider the percentages, but, as a guess, perhaps half the Bible is narrative (or something which approach narrative). In a narrative, you can often rephrase this or that sentence, and still end up with the same story. Minor mistakes by scribes over the years do not invalidate the text or give us a whole new set of doctrines. It is hard the screw up a narrative.

The preservation of New Testament manuscripts is quite another story. There are manuscript scraps which date back to the 2nd and 3rd century A.D. And, whereas discussion of OT manuscripts can be limited to fewer than 10 significant manuscripts, there are perhaps 26,000 Greek manuscripts of the NT. In the New Testament, there are perhaps a half dozen places where the text is questionable (the end of Mark I recall as being the most significant textual problem). However, for the most part, there are very few words in the NT which are in doubt.

The point I am making is, despite there being some errors in the text, these errors do not affect the overall doctrines that we extract from the Bible. These errors do not disturb a careful systematic theology which is the result of a careful examination of the Scriptures.

There is a great deal written about the inspiration of the Biblical text today; and there are perhaps a half dozen or more theories as to what it means for the Biblical text to be inspired. Geisler and Nix present 8 different theories of what it means for Scripture to be inspired in their *A General Introduction to the Bible* (a must-have book for any serious Christian, despite the vanilla-sounding title).

Today, we have developed a doctrine which explains how the Bible is to be understood and interpreted; and we know all about the false theories of inspiration which have been
used by others. For instance, there is one very subjective approach where the Bible becomes the Word of God. That is, someone reads it, and suddenly, he recognizes that portions of what he is reading go deep into his soul; and he knows that the Bible has become the Word of God for him.

There is another theory where the Bible contains the Word of God. That is, the Bible was written and preserved by imperfect men, so we know that there is a lot of dross in the Bible; but, if you look carefully, you can find the stuff which is really the word of God (many people use this approach suggest that the miracles are just nonsense added in by the superstitious). Both of those theories are false approaches to understanding the Bible.

The correct way to understand the word of God can be explained by the verbal, plenary approach. That is, every single word, phrase and sentence is the word of God and, simultaneously, the words of man. These words are inspired by God, but not in such a way that the writer of Scripture is a secretary taking dictation. That author’s feelings, thinking, experiences, vocabulary and grammar all contribute to both the content and the writing style of each book. So, this is why the books of John and Luke are so different in style and subject matter, even though each is a biography of Jesus. Nevertheless, each book is still inspired by God; each book is still fully the Word of God, and, as such, perfectly accurate—doctrinally and historically.

I mentioned that we do not know how the Old Testament books were chosen or decided upon; but there seems to be almost no disagreement here (the exception is the intertestamental books known as the apocrypha—which books are accepted by the Catholic church as divinely inspired and by no one else—insofar as I know).

The New Testament books have, on the other hand, simple and specific criteria by which they were determined to be in the canon: (1) they had to be written in the 1st century. Those making a determination of canonicity (and there were many people who did this) would not accept some book which is know to have been written in the 2nd or 3rd century. They know that is phony. (2) Each acceptable book must be written by a known apostle or a man closely associated with an Apostle (like Mark or Luke). There is one major exception to this and that is the book of Hebrews, the author of which no one knows (but many people have a theory). It is a book that is so obviously doctrinal and important to the early church that it had to be accepted, even though no one knows who wrote it.

Geisler and Nix NT Canonicity Chart (a graphic); from Introduction to the Bible, ©1968, p. 193. I redid the chart, splitting it into two parts, because it was hard to read.
This is a fantastic chart which tells us that, right from the 1st century, people were trying to determine which books of that era were authoritative. Which books (which all circulated separately throughout the ancient world) could be trusted as accurate portrayals of the Lord or could be read in order to understand correct doctrine? There are 17 individuals who we know about, dating from A.D. 70–400 who made reference to various books and letters in their own writings. Given that this is who we know about today, no doubt there were 10x or even 100x as many writers who referenced specific books in the first 4 centuries of the new era.

You will note that, as time went on, more and more people did not simply refer back to these books and letters, but they began to treat them as authoritative (that is what the O’s mean).

At the same time, some individuals and some groups began to define what the New Testament canon was (now, bear in mind that this all takes place before anyone fully appreciated what canonicity in the realm of theology really means). You can see that Muratorian (circa 170), Barocci (circa 206—not listed above) and Apostolic (circa 300) listed almost the same canon that we have today. Jerome, Augustine, and Athanasius...
(350–400) had the exact same canon as we have today (I see that I made an error in my chart and listed Augustine twice).

But besides these individuals, there were translations and councils which also put together lists of the canon.

**Geisler and Nix Translation and Council Chart** (a graphic): from *Introduction to the Bible*, ©1968, p. 193. This is the second half of the chart. As you see, Geiser and Nix divided these into 4 sets of witnesses: individual writers, specific canons, translation, and councils.

Early translations into other languages needed to figure out which books needed to be translated into another language. Also, various councils would meet with representatives and scholars attending from various churches, and they would come together to discuss and set forth what they believed the canon of the NT to be. As you see, there are at least 3 ancient councils who came up with the exact same list of books that we use today.
There are so many people today who think our canon of Scripture was developed by the Catholic church who just put out a list and that was final. As you can see, these books were discussed for 4 centuries. Furthermore, we do not have a translation into Aramaic with one set of books, and a translation into Latin with a slightly different set of books. It took time, it took a great deal of discussion and, no doubt, debate; but a canon was decided upon.

What is very important to note is, none of those listed above appear to have advocated for the Gospel of Saint Thomas or the Apocalypse of Peter or any of the other weird, non-canonical books (there were dozens). There is nowhere a list of books who got really close to being included in the NT canon, but just missed out. There is another list of books from that general era known as the Pseudopigrapha; also known as, the books rejected by everyone. Eusebius called these books “totally absurd and impious.”

You will notice by the charts that there was very little difficulty in determining which books did not belong in the canon, no way, no how. The problems were with books that we accept as a part of the canon: Revelation, because it was weird; Hebrews because it could not be attributed to an author; and some of the epistles because they were too short. The Pauline epistles were pretty much universally accepted; the general epistles required more discussion.

In the end, we have the canon that we have, and there are no serious theologians throughout the years who argue that some spurious book was left out but it should not have been; or that we need to take another look at Philemon.

The best way to understand this is, the canon was established by God. He allowed us to recognize it.


**The Biographies of Jesus:**

The gospels (which term means good news)—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—are 4 different biographies of Jesus the Messiah. Make no mistake about it—these are biographies, where each man observes and/or investigates; and then writes, taking into account his own sensibilities, contacts and experiences. Matthew was not favored by the general Jewish population because he was a tax collector. He would have been regarded as a national traitor by some; but he was a very devout and learned man—and apparently, quite successful at his work.

Matthew knows the Old Testament and he knows the prophecies of the coming Messiah; so he, more than any of the other biographers (and more than most pharisees), brings Old Testament Scripture into the picture. Jesus is the Prophet like Moses, the Suffering

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Servant, David’s Greater Son, the Messiah—and this is confirmed in His life when compared to the Scriptures about the Messiah. Matthew does this throughout his gospel. Furthermore, Matthew’s ears are honed to hear Old Testament teaching, which is most of what Jesus did. So when Jesus taught something which lined up with the Old Testament, Matthew was likely to recognize it and write down (or remember) both what Jesus taught along with the pertinent Scripture down (from memory). Therefore, Matthew often quoted pertinent Old Testament Scriptures.

Mark was a younger man, closely associated with Peter. He would have been a kid during the Lord’s earthly ministry. Mark may be understood as representing the next generation of believers. He is from the generation who never actually saw Jesus. He does not present the gospel as an eyewitness, but very much from Peter’s viewpoint, Peter being a man of action. Less talking and more doing. Mark may have acted as Peter’s secretary, which would have made the gospel of Mark actually the gospel of Peter. However much Mark was influenced by the testimony of others in writing of his gospel is unknown.

Dr. Peter Pett describes Mark’s gospel in this way: In the Gospel the historical material is brought together with the intention of presenting Jesus Christ in the fullness of His glory. It is not a life story, written out of academic interest, nor, except in general outline, a chronological history, but the reverent recording of truth about Jesus and His teaching that was carefully remembered and passed on by those who knew Him (who were skilled at memorising) because of Who He was, put together in order to present the truth about Him. The purpose was in order to demonstrate that He was what they had come to know Him to be. But there is no extravagance in the descriptions (this lack of extravagance is a distinctive feature of the four Gospels), they are sensible, deliberate, and even understated.  

Luke was a gentile, and he focuses primarily upon the humanity of Jesus Christ. The title for Jesus as such is the Son of Man (a title, interestingly enough, found 28 times in Matthew and 25 times in Luke; this title is found half as often in Mark and in John).

Because Luke is focused upon the Lord’s humanity, he is the biographer who focuses in on Mary, and upon the early years in Jesus’ life. (As an aside, Mary is not the mother of God; but she is the mother of the humanity of Jesus Christ).

Because Luke concerns himself with the Lord’s humanity, he therefore focuses on the line of Mary, which goes back all the way to Adam—the key being that Jesus is fully and completely a man. The promise of this Savior goes back to Gen. 3, where He is called the seed of the woman, a very important title, which we will study in the book of Luke.

I have heard it said that, people of that era were more concerned that the humanity of Jesus might get lost in His history, because He did things that no man has ever done before (or since). Therefore, his extraordinary qualities—even His Deity—stand out. But

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8 Dr. Peter Pett; Commentary Series on the Bible; from e-sword, Mark (book comments).
Jesus is fully and completely a man; and this is something that Luke emphasizes throughout.

Whereas, Matthew focuses, in part, upon Jesus’ Jewishness (and, therefore, he takes the paternal line of Jesus back to Abraham), Luke is not confined by the Jewish religion in any way, since he is a gentile to whom God’s grace came. However, Luke clearly respects the Scriptures and he quotes from them from time to time as well. The New Testament believer should never forget that God established a foundation for His faith in the Old Testament. We do not discard the Old Testament for any reason.

Luke was not an eyewitness to any of the incidents in his gospel, but he was an historian and he had contact with perhaps a dozen or more eyewitnesses or people whom he trusted. So he compiled his gospel based upon what others told him (and, I believe, upon the gospels of Matthew and Mark). Luke may have even had access to other biographical material lost to us but written by other Apostles or disciples (we don’t know this; I am simply expressing that this as a possibility). No doubt there were writings in that era lost to time and decay, where others chronicled their encounters with Jesus.

Luke, more than any other writer, emphasizes women who interacted with the Lord. My guess is, he interviewed quite a number of women for writing his gospel; some of their experiences are recorded; and many of their observations are recorded by Luke.

Matthew, Mark and Luke all wrote their gospels around A.D. 50–60. John waited until A.D. 90 or later and wrote his. I believe that he read the other gospels and thought, “What is missing from these gospels? How can I add to this conversation?” Also, people develop a perspective of their life experiences, which might be quite different when a person is 90 as opposed to being 60.

Two things stand out in particular in John’s gospel: a clear delineation of the gospel (“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved”); and a clear identification of Jesus with God. In John, Jesus is God the Creator, the God to be worshiped; the Person who, if you have seen Him, you have seen the Father. The gospel message and the Divine Nature of Jesus are nowhere else more perspicuous than in the book of John. I believe that John has a more holistic view of the Lord; a view which is the result of seeing Who the Lord is from more of an historic-theological perspective.

Even though Jesus’ Divine Nature is certainly found in Luke, it is not nearly as prominently featured as it is in John. There is a reason for this. Luke very closely follows the earthly ministry of Jesus. For the most part, Jesus did not go from town to town proclaiming, “I am the Son of God!” Throughout most of His public ministry of 3 or 4 years, Jesus allowed others to recognize and publically witness as to His identity; but Jesus did not do this very often Himself (there is a reason for this). Luke takes that into consideration in recording his biography of Jesus; John presents Jesus as the Son of God, the Creator of mankind and the universe.

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9 That is, the paternal line through Joseph, Jesus’ legal father.
Dr. Peter Pett makes this observation: [John’s] Gospel is full of incidental things which confirm that he was an eyewitness to the events that took place. He remembers almost incidentally the time at which events took place, the places at which they occurred, and significant details relating to the events which demonstrate his vivid memory of them. He also portrays himself as 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' who 'sat' (lay on a kind of mattress) next to Jesus at the last supper (John 21:20). And so important were his words seen to be that early church leaders wrote a superscription to confirm his authority (John 21:24).

All of this information is very important because, 2000 years later, skeptics claim that Jesus is simply a legend. However, we have 4 men who record his biography, all of them writing in the same century in which He lived. Whether described by a man who observed Jesus directly, or by a man who never saw Jesus, but heard all about Him—the gospels are very similar. They describe the same man, but from a different perspective. No gospel appears to exaggerate more than the other; neither no gospel to be based upon a legend. There does not appear to be any indication of the formation of a legend or of a mythological person.

It often takes hundreds of years for legends to be formed; and it is nearly impossible to build a legend upon existing contemporary biographies. We know the era during which these biographies were written because theological writers from the 2nd century are already quoting from these biographies. By the 2nd century, there were already discussions about which writings were considered to be authoritative, and the gospels were the first to be considered (as well as the first writings to be universally accepted).

Dr. Peter Pett, BA BD Doctorate of Divinity, is an excellent teacher of Scripture and he explains how he got skeptical students to consider the reality of Jesus Christ.

**Peter Pett on the Testimony of the Gospels**

When I was teaching in a comprehensive school in England I was once called on to take a class of fifth formers for a one off RE (Religious Education) class. They greeted me quite cynically on my arrival, although with no hostility, and made it quite clear that they thought that religion was purely speculative, and that I was wasting my time. What grounds, they asked, could there ever possibly be for accepting it? And besides, there was no proof that Jesus ever existed. They were not interested in anything that I had to say.

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10 Dr. Peter Pett; Commentary Series on the Bible; from e-sword, Gospel of John (book comments).
Peter Pett on the Testimony of the Gospels

So I commenced by saying, ‘well, let us look at the facts’. At least that brought a reaction. Their instant (and totally expected) reply was, ‘there are no facts. It is all just people’s beliefs’. To this I replied, ‘OK. I will write a fact on the board and you can then tell me whether it is a fact or not.’ I then proceeded to write on the board, ‘The Gospels exist.’ Of course they immediately began to say that that did not prove anything, but I pointed out that I was not suggesting that it proved anything about the Gospels (that is discovered by reading them sympathetically). All I wanted them to agree to was that they did exist. At last I got them to admit that it was true. In the end they admitted that whether they contained truth or not, they did exist. After all I had a copy of them with me. There was the first fact.

I then went on to point out that those Gospels contained teaching which was universally admired around the world. Wherever they reached the teaching within them was acknowledged by most thinking people, if not all, to be that of a ‘master’, indeed, a moral genius. This was not disputable. This too was a fact. They now had two facts. I then asked them where that teaching had come from. It had not existed in the previous century, and yet here it was suddenly arising in 1st century AD. What then was its source? Either we had to posit a number of moral geniuses who all wrote at the same time and pretended that what they wrote was spoken by someone else, (a unique event in the history of the world), or we had to posit that there was one moral genius of whose teaching they all wrote. One thing was sure it was not the production of a committee. Such unique gems do not result from committees. And had anyone even begun to manipulate it, its moral genius would have been lost. We know we have the genuine teaching of Jesus because if it had not been recorded accurately it would have been obviously spoiled. So now we had the fact that in 1st century AD there walked this earth a unique figure whose teaching is contained within the Gospels.

Then I pointed out that it did not matter what name we gave him. All we needed to see was that within that teaching that living genius had made claims that in any but a madman would be impossible. He had claimed to be the unique and only Son of God (e.g. Luke 20:1–18), and that although He would leave this world through death He would one day come in glory to gather those who were His to be with Him for ever. Now such a claim could be made by a religious fanatic or a madman. But this was no religious fanatic or madman. He was surrounded by religious fanatics, and He alone remained calm. Every word He spoke revealed sanity and moral purity and perfection. Read His teaching for yourself. If He was not sane, no one was. This too was a fact, for these teachings were not just added on, they were interwoven within all His teaching. They were an essential part of it.

So now they had three facts where previously they had had none, firstly that the Gospels exist, secondly that they contain a moral teaching second to none, spoken by someone who actually lived by them, and thirdly that He claimed that He had uniquely come from God, was looked at uniquely by God, and that He had come to fulfil God’s will in a unique way. We will see more of this in the Gospel.
Peter Pett on the Testimony of the Gospels

Thus I left them to think about something that they had never realised before. There were facts and they needed to think on them. And that is what the Gospel of Luke is all about. If you are not already a believer read it carefully and ask yourself, ‘From where did this man have these things? Who was He’. For Luke is not just a history, it is a living reproduction. And it reveals Someone Who was ‘out of this world’. And for your own sake, not for mine, you need to ensure that you come to the right conclusion about Him.

Dr. Peter Pett; Commentary Series on the Bible; from e-sword, Introduction to the Book of Luke.

For me, when deciding which gospel to begin with, it was a toss up between Luke and John. John would have been an easier choice based upon the Greek, but more difficult when it came to chronology.

**Lesson 007: The Book of Luke (intro) The Biographies of Jesus Part II**

Unless otherwise indicated, the ESV; capitalized will be used below.

I will use the words *gospel* and *biography* almost interchangeably below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Matthew</th>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Luke</th>
<th>John</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date of writing&lt;sup&gt;11&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>A.D. 45–60</td>
<td>A.D. 40–55</td>
<td>A.D. 60–70</td>
<td>A.D. 80–100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of writing&lt;sup&gt;12&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>A.D. 58–68</td>
<td>A.D. 55–65</td>
<td>A.D. 60–68</td>
<td>A.D. 80–90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are significant limitations on the dates—most people believe that Matthew, Mark and Luke wrote prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place in A.D. 70. This is never mentioned by any of the authors; and it would have been a very significant event to them. John waited perhaps 60 years before writing his gospel.

Skepticism is expressed by unbelievers concerning the gap between the experience and the writing of the gospels. People often need to have some perspective on life to recognize what has been most important in their lives. Furthermore, the disciples were apparently quite active in spreading the gospel message, planting churches and avoiding persecution for several decades. Most of the disciples were doers; they were active men; they were not, for the most part, theologians or writers (Matthew may be the exception to this).


<sup>12</sup> *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 1228 (footnote).
Also, the disciples believed that Jesus would be returning any day; so writing a biography that would stand up for the ages was not something that they thought about at first. They were simply trying to evangelize the world. Furthermore, the disciples expected the return of Jesus any day—so leaving an historical record behind did not occur to them at first.

<table>
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<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The author:</td>
<td>Matthew Levi, was the wealthy tax collector, whom Jesus called as a disciple.</td>
<td>John Mark, a close associate of Peter’s (Peter the Apostle); also associated with Paul. Mark came on the scene after the Lord’s public ministry.</td>
<td>Luke, a physician and an historian, also came on the scene after the public ministry of our Lord.</td>
<td>John ben Zebedee; the well-known Apostle and disciple of Jesus. He had been in business with Peter and his brother James (all were Apostles).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About the author</td>
<td>Matthew’s authorship seems to be the most questioned of the biographers of Jesus; however, there is no compelling reason to think that this is anyone else wrote his gospel.</td>
<td>John Mark is an early Christian convert who likely never met Jesus.</td>
<td>Luke, is the only gentile writer of Scripture (insofar as we know). He systematically put together his gospel after conducting interviews with many people who knew Jesus.</td>
<td>John appears to have done much of his writing from the Isle of Patmos, when he was exiled. It is very likely that John wrote his gospel and letters because he had been exiled.</td>
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13 We don’t know who wrote Hebrews. Despite its name and emphasis, its author may be unknown because he is a gentile.
### Gospel Comparison Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The author's associations</strong></td>
<td>Matthew would have been one of the 12, and actually a part of the Lord's 3–4 year public ministry.</td>
<td>Mark served both with Peter and with Paul. Most of his knowledge of Jesus probably came from Peter.</td>
<td>Luke was an important person from the first century, a gentile convert. He worked with Paul and apparently met and spoke with many eyewitnesses</td>
<td>John, like Matthew, was familiar with the public ministry of the Lord; and with the other 11 disciples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Possible motivation (s) for writing his gospel:</strong></td>
<td>Perhaps Matthew, having slowed down later in life, realized he needed to record all that he saw.</td>
<td>Perhaps Mark wrote his gospel at the insistence of Peter; also who grew older and perhaps slowed down.</td>
<td>Luke seems to indicate that he received a great deal of information and possibly written accounts, which caused him to write his gospel.</td>
<td>John was exiled to the Isle of Patmos, leaving him with few options in life but to write. His dynamic relationship with God no doubt motivated him.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The disciples have seen with their own eyes the most important events of human history. Two of them actually saw the Lord, in His short ministry, and after He had been raised from the dead. The other two were taking part in events which were changing the world. At some point, they took part in writing the most important literature in human history. Finally, their establishing Christianity and the message of the gospel turned the world upside down. No doubt, it took some time before they realized themselves the importance of what they had participated in.
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship with Jesus:</strong></td>
<td>Matthew was a disciple called by Jesus and who was with Jesus for 3–4 years. He wrote his gospel a few decades after this experience.</td>
<td>Mark apparently never met Jesus; and would have been a 2nd generation Christian. He would only know what people have told him about Jesus.</td>
<td>Luke appears to have had no direct association with Jesus, but was also a 2nd generation Christian like Mark (but likely older).</td>
<td>John was a disciple of Jesus, living with Him and learning from Him for 3–4 years. John was part of Jesus’ inner circle of disciples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship with other gospel writers:</strong></td>
<td>Matthew knew John as one of the disciples of Jesus. Matthew likely had access to Mark’s biography of Jesus.</td>
<td>Mark appears to have written Peter’s gospel. It is believed that he wrote the first gospel.</td>
<td>Luke had access to both Matthew and Mark’s gospels. He probably met Mark.</td>
<td>John certainly knew Matthew; but we don’t know about Mark or Luke. John likely read all 3 gospels before writing his own. I say that because John’s gospel is so unique of the four.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Associations</strong></td>
<td>Although Matthew is sometimes paired with another disciple, there is no indication of his close association with anyone.</td>
<td>John Mark worked with both Peter and Paul, although he seems to have had a falling out with Paul.</td>
<td>Luke is closely associated with Paul at the end of Acts as traveling with him to spread the gospel and to plant local churches.</td>
<td>John seems to be a part of the inner circle of disciples, which included James and Peter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writer’s style:</strong></td>
<td>A man fully familiar with the Old Testament. He may have desired to teach, given his knowledge.</td>
<td>Mark seems to be very interested in plot progression and action—likely a result of his association with Peter.</td>
<td>Luke was an historian who provided an historical texture to Jesus’ ministry.</td>
<td>John, although his Greek is simple, approaches Jesus from a sophisticated theological perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
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<tr>
<td>Previous employment</td>
<td>Matthew was a tax collector.</td>
<td>Unknown.</td>
<td>Luke was apparently well-educated and previously a physician.</td>
<td>John was co-owner of a fishing business with his brother James and associate Peter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other writings</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Acts</td>
<td>1John, 2John, 3John and Revelation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>Jewish believers and unbelievers, to show Jesus is undeniably the Savior-Messiah.</td>
<td>It is said the Mark wrote for gentiles and Romans. He has concern for those being persecuted.</td>
<td>Specifically written for Theophilus. Assuming Luke thought of a wider audience, then he wrote for gentiles, believers and unbelievers, to tell them that the Jewish Messiah came for them.</td>
<td>John, although Jewish, seems to have a more universal approach. Many believe that his is the gospel for the newly formed church—the universal church. The emphasis on the gospel suggests that John thought that unbelievers might read his gospel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layout</td>
<td>Arranged in 5 sections of narrative followed by a discourse; possibly intending to mimic the 5 books of the Torah.</td>
<td>Arranged into 4 sections by geographical location: Galilee, other journeys, back to Galilee, and the final week in Jerusalem.</td>
<td>Arranged into 3 main sections covering 3 periods of time and place: Galilee, other places, and Jerusalem for the final week.</td>
<td>Arranged chronologically into 4 main sections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>Rhythmic; poetic. Fast-moving; emphasis upon action.</td>
<td>Precise, historic, educated and scholarly.</td>
<td>Written in the 1st person; very simple Greek.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Gospel Comparison Chart**

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<tr>
<td><strong>As an aside,</strong> the dramatically different styles of these authors suggests to me that they originally wrote their biographies in the koine Greek language. I have heard some claim that the New Testament was first written in Aramaic; but I do not find any evidence of that.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length</strong></td>
<td>18,345 Greek words; 23,534 in the NASB.</td>
<td>11,304 Greek words; 14,833 in the NASB.</td>
<td>19,482 Greek words; 25,794 in the NASB.</td>
<td>15,635 Greek words; 19,519 in the NASB.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beginning of each gospel:</strong></td>
<td>Matthew begins with the genealogy which confirms Jesus’ paternal link to King David.</td>
<td>Mark begins with the ministry of John the Herald, who prepared the way of the Lord.</td>
<td>Luke has a formal introduction, telling us for whom the book is written and how Luke composed it.</td>
<td>John goes back to the beginning of creation. Then John speaks of the herald, the calling of the disciples, and the wedding at Cana.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary focus of Jesus.</strong></td>
<td>Jesus as David’s Greater Son, the Messiah-King, fulfilling the promises of the Old Testament.</td>
<td>Jesus is God’s suffering Servant, man’s Redeemer, and Prophet. He is a healer and miracle worker.</td>
<td>Jesus is fully man, a man of prayer, is the ultimate Teacher. He reveals great concern for women, the poor and gentiles.</td>
<td>Jesus is fully God, the Son of God, the Living Word of God, and the Creator of heaven and earth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unique features</strong></td>
<td>Matthew provides 50 direct quotations from the OT and 75 allusions to the OT. He calls Jesus the Son of David 9x.</td>
<td>Written in a simple Greek. Also, Aramaic words are defined, suggesting a non-Jewish audience.</td>
<td>Luke has perhaps the most difficult Greek, featuring many words not found elsewhere in the New Testament. Many quotes from the Greek Septuagint.</td>
<td>John writes in the simplest Greek; it is the perfect assignment for a first-year Greek student to translate. The only gospel referring to Jesus as the Word.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Gospel Comparison Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Matthew</th>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Luke</th>
<th>John</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unique sections</strong></td>
<td>Christ as a child; the Sermon on the Mount</td>
<td>He explains some Jewish terms and customs and Aramaic words to a non-Jewish audience.</td>
<td>The rich man and Lazarus; salvation of the thief on the cross; the prodigal son.</td>
<td>The turning of water into wine; raising Lazarus from the dead; the I Am statements; Thomas doubting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unique emphasis:</strong></td>
<td>Jesus fulfills Old Testament promises, and is therefore the promised Messiah. Matthew is filled with OT quotations.</td>
<td>The actions and ministry of Jesus. Jesus’ deeds are in the forefront. There is less emphasis on chronological order in Mark, according to Papias of the 2nd century.</td>
<td>It is clear that Luke is well-researched, including a plethora of historic details in his gospel. This is integrated with the Lord’s teachings. Also, Luke features an emphasis on women believers during this time period.</td>
<td>An holistic approach to Jesus, His Person and deeds. John provides some emphasis not in the other gospels. Mentions only 8 miracles of Jesus and calls them signs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key phrase, key word:</strong></td>
<td>Kingdom of Heaven (found 32 times in Matthew and nowhere else).</td>
<td>Immediately (found 36 times in Mark; 14 times in Matthew)</td>
<td>Kingdom of God (found 32 times; 14 times in Mark)</td>
<td>Believe, believers, etc. (occurs 99 times; 16 times in Mark)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quotations from the Old Testament</strong></td>
<td>96</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although many identify Son of Man with Luke, it occurs 25 times in Luke and 30 times in Matthew (also, 14 times in Mark and 13 times in John).

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14 These numbers are taken from the [Blue Letter Bible site](https://www.blueletterbible.org), accessed December 28, 2018.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Matthew</th>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Luke</th>
<th>John</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The specific quotations are listed at the Blue Letter Bible site <a href="#">here</a> and <a href="#">here</a>. The verses are actually quoted with their OT counterparts <a href="#">here</a>. Luke, in the book of Acts, makes an additional 57 references to the OT. Only Paul, previously a pharisee, has as many references as Matthew (74 alone in the book of Romans and 173 overall).</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interesting facts of author's unique approach:</th>
<th>Matthew has more references to money than any of the other biographers.</th>
<th>Mark does not mention the words Messiah, law, Samaria or Samaritan.</th>
<th>Luke has far more references to political leaders and their actions.</th>
<th>John seemed to feature more interactions with the disciples.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only one Passover is mentioned—the final one.</td>
<td>Same as Matthew.</td>
<td>Same as Matthew.</td>
<td>3 or 4 Passover celebrations are referenced.</td>
<td>Mentions 6 Jewish feasts/celebrations; including the Passover (3x).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic Emphasis</td>
<td>Galilee Ministry</td>
<td>Judaea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gospel Comparison Chart</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Author</strong></td>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Luke</td>
<td>John</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The end of each gospel:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus makes some appearances to the disciples; a plot is hatched among the chief priests to explain the empty tomb.</td>
<td>Jesus encourages His disciples.</td>
<td>The final passage is strongly disputed (Mark 16:9–20). How much of it is accurate is unknown and how it was added is unknown as well.</td>
<td>Several post-resurrection narratives are recorded. Then Jesus is taken up into heaven.</td>
<td>Jesus appears to His disciples for the 3rd time (specifically to 8 of them). They are fishing. Jesus speaks to Peter and tells him 3x, “Feed my sheep.”15 Jesus also tells Peter and John how they will die.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Final passage</strong></td>
<td>Mat 28:18–20 And Jesus came and said to them, &quot;All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.&quot;</td>
<td>Mark 16:19–20 So then the Lord Jesus, after He had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs.</td>
<td>Luke 24:51–53 While He blessed them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.</td>
<td>John 21:25 Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15 The wording is slightly changed each time.
Gospel Comparison Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Matthew</th>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Luke</th>
<th>John</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uniqueness of material:</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The uniqueness percentages, which I took from the Open Bible, are quite logical. Each successive biographer is aware of the previous biographies, but is also aware of information not found in previous gospels; and desires to share that additional information with the body of Christ. John, in particular, had a great deal to share about the Lord’s life, which was not previously covered.

Comments:

We will accept the traditional names assigned to these books as the names of the authors. Although these names are not found in the gospel text to indicate authorship, there is no compelling reason to assume that someone else authored these books.

Matthew, Mark and Luke are known as the synoptic gospels; they can fairly easily be set up in parallel. John’s gospel is very different from theirs.

Some of this material is from:
The Open Bible; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 1228 (footnote).
Also from from so4j.com; accessed November 21, 2018.

Lesson 008: The Book of Luke The Biographies of Jesus Part III

How many people in history, prior to the invention of the printing press, have 4 biographies written by their contemporaries? I would suggest that there is no one in human history prior to A.D. 1500 who has 4 contemporaries who have written biographies of him. For one thing, few people are that interesting; secondly, few people would allow anyone to be so close as to be bold enough to write a biography. But, even more incredible is, the bulk of these 4 biographies primarily focus on a 3 or 4 year period of time in the life of Jesus. There is a smattering of early information found in Matthew and Luke (and John does go back to the beginning of history); but these biographies primarily concentrate on the public ministry of Jesus Christ.

Speaking of which, Jesus is the most unlikely religious figure in human history. He traveled mostly on foot; He did not travel very far (mostly He taught in Galilee region and in Jerusalem—traveling perhaps 60 or 70 miles); and He never wrote anything down. We do not have the gospel of Jesus or the epistles or psalms of Jesus (actually, the entire Bible is that).
Furthermore, His public ministry was a scant 3 or 4 years long. We should not even know Who He is; there is nothing in the basic facts of His life and ministry which suggest that Jesus should be remembered at all. Yet, Jesus is the most well-known Man in human history. We divide our history into what happened before Him and what takes place in human history after Him. Not only are there 4 biographies of Him written by 4 contemporaries; but, there have been more books written about Him subsequently than about any other man in human history.

Even those who reject Jesus, cannot help but use His Name in order to swear.

Unlike other religious figures (like Confucius, Buddha or Mohammed), Jesus is essential to Christianity. Confucius, Buddha and Mohammed are not necessary to their respective religions. Had those religions been begun by Larry, Moe and Curly, they would have been the same religion. All religions are a set of beliefs and precepts; and if someone is able to sell those beliefs and practices to a large enough population, then it becomes a significant religion. But whether Curly tells you to pray 5x a day towards Mecca or Mohammed says to do that, it makes no difference. You still have to engage in the same act in order to please God.

Jesus is different. Even though there are a set of precepts which are applicable to the believer in the Church Age, what is fundamental to our thinking is, first, we have to place our faith in Jesus Christ. Not in His teachings, not in His parables, not in any set of rituals that He taught, but in the Person of Jesus Christ. I am saved because Jesus Christ died for my sins. I am sinful before God and have no access to God because of my sinfulness—my sin nature, my personal acts of sin, and the imputation of Adam’s sin to me. It is only through Jesus the Person that I have a relationship with God.

Jesus took my sins upon Himself and paid the penalty for those sins. Because of Jesus, I now have access to God. He is integral to the faith of Christianity. Without Jesus specifically, there is no forgiveness of sin; there is no Christian life; there is no relationship with God. It is the Lord’s death on the cross and His taking upon Himself the penalty for my sins that saves me. If I do not stand upon the Person of Jesus, then no matter what I do in my life, I have no relationship with God—no matter how much I try to obey the Bible or the teachings of Jesus. My access to God is based wholly upon Jesus dying for my sins; my access to God is based wholly upon God accepting my faith in Christ as fundamental and sufficient.

You will notice that I said nothing about any specific church, denomination, sect or group. When it comes to salvation, the local church that you attend is immaterial, as long as they present Jesus Christ as the only Mediator between man and God.

A person might attend church regularly; he might take communion; he might serve on the board of deacons. But—and nearly every denomination will teach this—if he has not placed his faith in Jesus, he is not saved, no matter how Christian he acts. Every person in the world who meets Charley Brown might say, “Now, that Charley is a real Christian—he lives it in his daily life.” But, if Charley has not placed his faith in Christ
Jesus, then he is not saved and he will spend eternity in hell—no matter how many people would testify in his behalf.

Furthermore, once you have exercised faith in Jesus Christ, you are saved forever. You cannot lose your salvation, because it is based upon Jesus and what He did for us upon the cross, not upon anything that we do. Some believers even take the attitude, “Well, thank you, God; I will see you in eternity.” And, with that, they go off and they do whatever they want to do. However, even with that attitude, we cannot lose our salvation because our relationship with God is completely based upon the finished work of Christ, not upon anything that we can think, say or do after the fact. Our faith in Jesus Christ is a one-time act; and it places us with God in eternity, no matter what we do after that moment.

The where of Jesus is important. We are going to read about Him traveling from place to place. Therefore, this map will help us to orient to His movements.

**Israel During the Time of Jesus** (a map); from [Conforming to Jesus.com](https://www.conformingtojesus.com); accessed December 1, 2018.

Jesus visited many synagogues in the Galilee area, indicating that the people there were mostly Jewish. South in Judæa, this would have also been occupied by Jews.

These 4 biographies each view Jesus from a slightly different angle. For this study, we will focus on Luke’s understanding of the Lord. For some incidents, we will refer to other gospels; but, for the most part, I will try to confine our study to Luke’s work.
Luke, as the Author of the Gospel of Luke/ Canonicity: Luke has been presumed to be the author of this book, even though his name is not actually affixed to it. This tradition goes back to the early Christian writings of Justin Martyr (ca. 100-165) and Tertullian (born ca. 160). Both men identify the author as Luke. Even though these writers are making these claims perhaps 80 years after Luke has written Luke and Acts, these men would have gotten this information from tradition and/or writings from their era. These men are writing so soon after the century of Christ, that we may assume that they are accurate with a reasonable certitude.

The gospels, by the way, were recognized very early on as divinely inspired; and they were each identified by their human author. Pseudo Barnabas (70–130); Clement of Rome (96–97), Ignatius (110), Polycarpa (110–150) all recognized one or more of the gospels as divinely inspired, along with 13 other individual witnesses living in the 2nd and 3rd centuries. These early witnesses both help to confirm the New Testament canon which we have today, and further insure that changes or editing did not take place in the centuries that followed. Furthermore, such editing would have been virtually impossible, as copies of the various books were scattered all over the Roman world and beyond. Furthermore, these ancient scholars just referred to—they often quoted from the gospels and from various epistles, taking them as authoritative writings. If you have thousands of copies of these gospels (or quotes from the gospels) being circulated, it is pretty hard for someone to decide to make a change or an insertion.

Besides these individual witnesses, there are 5 canons of New Testament Scripture assembled prior to A.D. 400; 3 translations; and 4 church councils. It is from these various witnesses that we know who wrote which books (or letters); and why we have the canon of Scripture that we have today. Let me add, these are the witnesses that we are aware of 2000 years or so after the fact. There would have been hundreds of individuals, as well as other canon listings, translations and councils who have been lost to history.

One of the hot topics of Christian theologians in the first 3 or 4 centuries of Christianity was canonicity. Which books were canonical? It is highly unlikely that they thought of inspiration in the terms that we do today. They would have simply wanted to know, which books were authoritative. If I am making a theological point, Polycarpa might muse, from whom may I quote in order to establish that point?

There were two primary considerations: who wrote the book and was he an Apostle or closely associated with an Apostle? Obviously, they could only consider books written in the first century and they needed to know who the author was. Interestingly enough, there is an exception to this rule. The book of Hebrews was accepted into the canon, but without knowing who wrote it.

Insofar as the gospels are concerned, neither Luke nor John Mark (the author of Mark) had been actual eyewitnesses to these events (Luke would have been an eyewitness to some of the things recorded in the final chapters of Acts). However, Mark’s gospel is essentially
Peter’s gospel; but, for some reason, Mark recorded it. For all we know, he could have been Peter’s secretary/amanuensis.

In his travels with Paul, Luke apparently had opportunities to meet with many eyewitnesses; and it is clear in the first few chapters that Luke must have met with Mary, the mother of Jesus. There is information in the book of Luke that only she would have known.

We also can guess that Luke wrote his gospel between A.D. 60 and 65. Peter’s death, Paul’s death and the fall of Jerusalem are not recorded in the book of Acts; suggesting that Luke completed his work (the gospel of Luke and Acts) before any of those significant events took place.

Luke, realizing that the Advent of Jesus Christ was the most important event of all history, and because he knew many people who were associated with Jesus Christ at the beginning of His public ministry; Luke endeavored to write down, in chronological order (for the most part), the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Luke does not have a preface to his book, nor did he write a forward, so we do not know all those that he spoke with. However, since this is the Word of God, we may trust the historical accuracy of all these events.

Luke, the man, is mentioned directly in Scripture only 3 times: in Col. 4:14 2Tim. 4:11 Philemon 1:24. If not for the title of His book Kata Loukon (Κατὰ Λούκον), which means according to Luke, we would not know that Luke wrote the Gospel according to Luke (we know that Luke wrote Acts because it was written to the same person the book of Luke was written for).

Much of this study was written based upon information which I have accumulated over the years, as well as a careful, word-by-word examination of the text. However, I did refer to some specific teachers from time to time.

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**Back Up and Occasional Bibliography**

Dr. Dan Hill in [Grace Notes](http://example.com/notes).
James Allen at [Alive and Powerful](http://example.com/powerful).

I did not refer to these studies throughout. However, I read them carefully for the introduction and for any passages where I was either confused by or was unable to provide a full explanation that I was satisfied with.

One thing I ought to point out—the disciples did not necessarily know it all (nor did the prophets of old). Paul was probably the most doctrinally oriented of all the Apostles, and yet, you can know more than Paul knows. My point being, even though Luke records His
gospel in accordance with the leading of God the Holy Spirit, Luke does not know everything. He hangs with Paul and he knows a lot of stuff; but he does not know it all. It is possible for you to know and understand more than Luke; and even more than Paul.

How can I make such a statement? Easy, and I will back it up. All of the gospels and most of the epistles had been written by the time that John was exiled to Patmos. He had access to much of this material, and he read the other biographies and he knew what they did not have is, a clear delineation of the gospel and the fact that Jesus is God come to live among mankind. What could be more fundamental to our faith than those two facts; and yet, after studying 3 gospels, those two important founding principles do not jump out at us as they do in the gospel of John. My point being, these truths are fundamental to the faith, and yet, they are not found in the 3 existing gospels.

There are many important doctrines which have been fully developed not necessarily in any passage in the Word of God, but by comparing many passages of the Word of God together. The concept of typology certainly goes back at least to the letter to the Hebrews; but this has been developed in far more detail after the completion of the canon of Scripture. What the inspiration of Scriptures actually means—that comes after the canon was completed. Now, all of these doctrines are based upon the existing Scriptures, but there is nothing to indicate that they were fully developed during the ministry of Paul or Peter or John.

Lesson 009: The Book of Luke Israel and the Church Part I

There will be two technical theological terms used in this lesson: dispensationalism and covenant theology. Dispensation is originally the translation of the word oikonomia (οἰκονομία) [pronounced oy-koh-nohm-EE-uh], which means: 1) the management of a household or of household affairs; 1a) specifically, the management, oversight, administration, of other's property; 1b) the office of a manager or overseer, stewardship; 1c) administration, dispensation. Strong's #3622. The word dispensation is brought over into theology in this way: a dispensation is a period of time in which God oversees His people by functioning through a specific entity—it is how God manages and oversees His household, if you will. We have taken the word dispensation and have applied it to periods of time—epochs—during which God deals with His people in a specific way. If we wanted to strictly stay with the original use of dispensation, then we would speak of the Age or the Epoch of the Jews rather than the Jewish dispensation. However, in common usage today, dispensation can refer to the epoch itself or to how God oversees and interacts with His people (during a specific period of time).

Personally, I was introduced to dispensational theology at a very young spiritual age while purchasing small booklets in a Pentecostal-type bookstore during my first year as a Christian. Even though I rejected the whole second blessing movement; I to this day remember getting this very small and inexpensive booklet which explained the dispensations of God, and it made complete and perfect sense to me.
Covenant theology—which is in opposition to dispensationalism—actually include two very different points of view: (1) the first view is where the differences between Israel and the church are so blurred that, they believe that the first church started in Abraham’s tent. Because of the radical differences between Israel and the church, this is a very difficult position to justify. (2) The second view sees Israel as a specific national entity; but believes that God transferred His promises from an unfaithful nation Israel to those who have believed in Jesus, regardless of their national identity. The more that you push on this second view, following their thinking out to logical conclusions, the closer you move towards dispensationalism.

The umbrella term applied to these two theological positions is covenant theology; but there is no real consistency among groups today who see themselves as churches of the covenant (so to speak). At one end of the spectrum, there are those who believe the first church began in Abraham’s tent and somehow, that is the same thing as the local churches that we have today; and at the other end of the spectrum, we have those who believe that God began with an actual nation Israel, but that they rejected Jesus so strongly, that God took all of His promises for Israel and gave them to people who believed in His Son.

Dispensationalism views nation Israel as a national entity with an important relationship with God up to the birth and ministry of Jesus Christ. However, the church was established after the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. Israel and the church are logically two very different entities. God worked through Israel for a time (about 2000 years) and now God is working through the church, which, so far, has been a period of about 2000 years.

This point in human history that we live in is known as the Church Age. Church in the Greek is the word ekklēsia (ἐκκλησία) [pronounced ehk-klay-SEE-ah] which means an assembly, a gathering, church. Strong’s #1577. It is used in several different ways: (1) for any public gathering of people; (2) for what is often called the church universal, which refers to all believers (sometimes, we are speaking of all believers on the earth at any given time; and sometimes, all believers who have lived during the Church Age); (3) for the local church, such as, the First Grace Church of Podunk Falls (generally speaking, some members will be believers and some will not be believers; ideally speaking, all who attend are or will become believers). The designation Church Age is all about the universal church—the body of believers—and their responsibilities in this epoch.

One of the reasons that God introduced the concept of Jews and Gentiles is so that He could get across the idea that there are two kinds of people in this world: Jews and Gentiles; saved and unsaved; those who have a relationship with God and those who do not. This does not mean that all Jews were saved; but, that was true when they left Egypt. Interestingly enough, the Exodus generation constantly rebelled against God, despite being saved. But, the larger point is, God differentiates. The Jews, generally speaking, have a relationship with God; and the gentiles, generally speaking, did not. There were certain exceptions to this; and it will become clear in the book of Luke that many Jews did not
believe in Jesus. They did not believe Him to be the Jewish Messiah or the promised Jewish King.

God began the Hebrew race with Abraham and his wife Sarah, who went for a very long time without having children. God promised Abraham a child, but, up to this point, they had had none. Sarah finally insisted that Abraham have relations with her personal servant girl, Hagar, and Hagar gave birth to Ishmael. That was not God’s directive will; that was all on Sarah. Ishmael was not the son God had promised to Abraham.

Regardless, 13 years later, Sarah gave birth to a son, Isaac. God only accepted the son Isaac, but not Ishmael, because Isaac believed in Jehovah Elohim. Actually, it was more complicated than that, but we will stay with the simplified version to begin with.

Isaac later had twin sons, Esau and Jacob; and God called Jacob a Hebrew and Esau was a Gentile (God said, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”). This is because Jacob believed in Jehovah Elohim and developed a relationship with God; but Esau did not (Esau probably believed in God, but he too willingly set his birthright aside). In their lifetimes, Jacob eventually followed the guidance of God; but Esau did not. I say eventually, because Jacob fought against God most of his life (illustrated by his wrestling match with God); but he appeared to finally accept God’s will when living in Egypt.

For about 2000 years, God worked through the Jews; and primarily through the nation Israel. This we call the Age of Israel. However, after the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, things changed. The Jews, as a whole, outright rejected their Savior-Messiah. Therefore, God set the Hebrew people aside—temporarily—and began a new program known as the church. The Church began at the Day of Pentecost, sometime around 30–34 A.D., when God poured out His Spirit upon all believers who were assembled in one place with one accord on that day (Acts 2:1–4). Some of the converts of the early church were Jewish and some were gentile. There was no difference between them, because they had all believed in the Risen Christ and they had all been give the Holy Spirit.

However, in between the temporary halt of the Age of Israel and the beginning of the Church Age, we have what has been coined by R. B. Thieme, III (and perhaps others) as the Age of the Hypostatic Union (a term which we will later define). If it is easier to understand this as the Epoch of Jesus, that is just as good of a designation.

During at least the public portion of Jesus’ ministry, God became flesh and lived among us (John 1:1–3, 14). During that time, Jesus Christ first offered the Kingdom of God to the Jews of Judah. However, as a nation, they rejected their King and therefore, they rejected the Kingdom that He offered to them.

16 Ishmael appears to have believed in the Revealed God, but he did not fully follow God’s guidance. His harassment of the child Isaac indicates that he was not willing to accept what God was doing.
Near the end of His ministry, Jesus began to proclaim the Kingdom of God to the Samaritans (half-Jews) and then also to those who were Gentiles. Jesus came to His people, but His people rejected Him; and He would then make Himself available to those who were not His people (compare Hosea 2:23 Romans 9:25). At the very beginning of the book of John, the author John warns us about this: He came to His Own, and His Own people did not receive Him. (John 1:11; ESV; capitalized)

The reason that dispensations are important to the study of the book of Luke is, to understand what Jesus was teaching. He was teaching the Law of God; He lived in the Epoch of Israel and was teaching them the Old Testament as they should have learned it. However, Jesus will also teach some Church Age doctrines; and, therefore, it is important to understand that both dynamics are occurring during the Age of the Hypostatic Union.

Many people do not understand that most of what Jesus teaches in the gospels, during His 3–4 year ministry is primarily the Law of God. He taught the Old Testament. He taught the Law and the Prophets. There is this nonsense generalization that the God of the Old Testament was a God of vengeance; but Jesus reveals a God of Love. Both of those characteristics can be found in the Old and New Testaments; and, interestingly enough, some would argue that both of those character traits of God are anthropopathisms.

When quoting Scripture to make a point, Jesus quoted from the Old Testament—the only Scripture which existed at that time. We should understand the vast majority of the gospels are all about the Jewish Age—and the great failure of the religious class to preserve and accurately teach the Old Testament teachings.

Consequently, Jesus had to prepare His disciples for a change in programs (or a change in household management, if you will). So, Jesus taught His disciples a little about the Church Age (most prominently in the Garden of Gethsemane and during the Last Supper). John presents this teaching in detail; but the other gospels do not. This information was brand new; it did not come out of the Old Testament. These are some of the doctrines that we adhere to today.

Luke, the man, was originally a physician. While associated with Paul, he was an evangelist and probably could be called an apostle (small a). There are the original 11 Apostles, whom we will meet in the Book of Luke; there is Paul, called by Jesus on the Damascus Road; and then there are a half dozen or more people who are called apostles (in the epistles), who had, presumably, several communication gifts and extended authority over more than one local church. These men evangelized (which means to tell groups of people Who and What Jesus Christ is), and they also taught the Word of God, including Church Age doctrines. Some of them founded and stayed with one church, but most traveled around and had authority over more than one local church.

Before the Day of Pentecost, when Jesus gave the Spirit to those who believed in Him, there was no such thing as a local church. After the Day of Pentecost, churches began to be established by the Apostles all over the Roman empire and beyond.
This gift of apostleship died out (it allows for a person to have authority over more than one local church). All of the sign gifts died out. What replaces these gifts is the complete Word of God, which we know as the Old and New Testaments. There are still gifts given by God the Holy Spirit in the post-canon Church Age, but they do not include healing, tongues, interpretation of tongues, miracles or apostleship. These gifts were instrumental in establishing the authority of the men who had them; and through them, local churches were established. However, once these local churches had been established and once the authority of these men had also been established, there became less and less reason for the sign gifts. Once the New Testament had been fully written (prior to A.D. 100) and circulated, there was no longer a need for these early gifts. In fact, most of those gifts died out long before the New Testament had been completed, because the authority of the men with those gifts had been established. The second time that Paul went to a church, he did not have to reestablish his authority there. When Paul's reputation preceded him or when other established Apostles, like Peter, vouched for his teaching abilities (which Peter did), then Paul did not have to establish his authority.

And regarding the most important gift of the early Church Age—Apostleship—John was the last living Apostle.

For about 2000 years, God worked through the national entity Israel. He sent them prophets and priests; He interacted with Israel; and the Old Testament Scriptures were written by Hebrew people (Job and the first 10 or so chapters of Genesis may be exceptions to this). After Jesus, God works through the church—the body of believers who have believed in Him. There are a set of protocols established for nation Israel; there are a separate set of protocols established for the local church.

The church and nation Israel are two very different entities with great differences between them. There are some things which they have in common; and many places where they diverge. However, make no mistake about this fact: the church is not a reworking of Israel, it is not a new and somewhat improved incarnation of Israel, it is not a replacement for Israel. The covenants which God made to Israel have not been taken away from the Hebrew people and given to or applied to the church, either as they stand in Scriptures or in some modified, spiritualized way. The church is not a permanent replacement for or new version of Israel. The promises that God made to Israel are not somehow spiritualized and then applied to this new entity, the church. In today’s computer-driven parlance, the Church is not Israel 2.0. Those are a variety of incorrect notions, most of which are known today as covenant theology.

You may have noticed that I kept using the word spiritualized, regarding the reworking of the original promises (covenants). This is somewhat of a nonsensical term, because Israel was not reworked in some spiritual way and out comes the church. And how exactly do you take the very specific promises of Israel and give them to those who have believed in Jesus? Does this mean that God has given you an apartment in downtown Jerusalem that you only need claim?
Even worse is the theology which somehow puts on blinders and sees the church as being basically the same thing as Israel. The blinders keep such a person from seeing the stark differences between the two.

Covenant theology claims that (1) God made a variety of covenants (contracts, agreements, promises) with Israel (most of which are one-sided agreements); (2) Israel did a really lousy job holding up her end of these contracts; and so (3) God sets Israel aside for good and develops a similar relationship with believers after the time of Christ, who then take the place of Israel, and are, in a sense, spiritualized Israel. Many of this theological position go so far as to claim that the church actually began in Abraham’s tent, and that what we have today is just some normal outgrowth of that tent-church. As R. B. Thieme, Jr. so succinctly put it, balderdash!

Hopefully, you can see that these are very different beliefs, but they fall under the classification of covenant theology. The problem with taking this position is, just how much credence do you give to ancient nation Israel? The more than you distinguish between ancient Israel and the modern church, the closer you come to dispensationalism (which is the correct way to view the history of man through God’s eyes).

To be continued....
What are some of the problems with covenant theology?

1. Some very specific promises—promises that never had some odd connotation for 2000 years, and suddenly, they are changed to fit me and my life? That is absurd.

2. No one can doubt the connection of Israel to the land of Canaan. This is one of the big themes of the Old Testament. In Covenant Theology, this has somehow disappeared?

3. Although Jesus was rejected by the people of Israel as a whole and by the religious class, He was not rejected by all Jews. His 12 disciples (later Apostles) are all Jews. Paul came from the religious class.

4. There are a great many prophecies in the Old Testament still be be fulfilled. Most of these are related to Jesus and to Israel. Have they been set aside?

5. There is a future for Israel taught by Jesus and taught in the book of Revelation and in some passages in the Old Testament. There are many prophecies to be fulfilled, and those prophecies appear to be closely related to Jesus, not to the church.

6. The book of Revelation has the church in it (first 3 chapters) and the tribes of Israel. If the book of Revelation can distinguish between these two groups, why can’t we?

7. It makes little sense for the relationship between God and Israel to be so specific and so literal; and then to suddenly change all of that, to the point where, everything that took place over 2000 years is completely and totally gone, even though, that is the first \( \frac{3}{4} \) of the Bible.

9. The concept and function of nation Israel is so tremendously different from the church; that it is hard to believe that someone could see them as being, somehow, the same things.

It is also rather self-centered to only see things in the light of your reality. Obviously, my reality is not the Jewish people, being raised Jewish, or having the affinity for the land of Canaan. However, that does not mean that I can simply dismiss them as not really existing any more.

In reality, the church and Israel are two separate and distinct entities. To construct the people and later, the nation, of Israel, God began with a people who were descended genetically from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (named Israel by God). God preserved this people and He isolated them, so that there was no intermixture with other peoples. The books of Genesis and Exodus are very careful about presenting the protection and preservation of this genetic identity.

This people were cultivated, you might say, by God, in the land of Canaan in Genesis 12–45. God then brought all of them in Gen. 46 to Egypt, where they remained isolated from the Egyptians, in whose nation they lived. They lived in Egypt for 400 years and then God removed them, taking them back to the land of Canaan.
At this point in time, after Israel had been 400 years in Egypt, the inhabitants of Canaan had reached a point of terrible degeneracy. At this point in time, the people of Israel were large enough to defeat the peoples of Canaan and to end their perverted religious practices (which included child sacrifice). God brought them into Canaan and gave that land to them. However, they had to take this land militarily, which is the story of the book of Joshua. It ought to be clear that none of this has anything at all to do with the modern church. Israel was called upon on many occasions to use her military might. This is not part of what is required of the church. We don't have a church military force. We don't meet with other churches and go on military maneuvers or to combat retreats (this does not mean that some believers of the same church cannot share this sort of enthusiasm with each other—I am simply saying that this is not a church-wide experience).

God's relationship with Israel was defined by a series of covenants (or contracts or agreements), given successively to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and later to Moses and the people as a whole. Finally, God gave a covenant specifically to King David.

When God sent the promised King/Messiah to Israel, they rejected Him. Had Israel, as a whole, accepted Jesus as their King/Messiah/Savior, then that nation would have gone right into the Millennium and God's ultimate promises would have been fulfilled to them. Most of the covenants of God were one-sided, meaning, God made promises of what He would do for Israel—it would have been very hard for Israel to break their half of the covenant, because the covenant never really depended upon them. However, the people of Israel rejected their Messiah Whom God sent—they crucified Him (actually, set Him up to be crucified by the Romans). Obviously, because God cannot fulfill His covenants with people who have rejected their Savior and Messiah; He had to set this people aside temporarily. The people of Israel will return to their God.

There will be a literal nation Israel in the future ruled over by Jesus Christ. After the church is raptured, the Age of Israel will be concluded. There are 7 more years remaining on Israel’s clock. When Jesus rules over nation Israel, that will be a new dispensation known as the Millennium.

On a temporary (or interim) basis, God has raised up the church, the body of believers who believe in Him. The church is the entity through which God works on earth today. We are not confined to a particular nation; we do not continue to write Scripture; and who we are descended from is never an issue. We do not observe any of the rituals which the people of Israel engaged in. We do not keep the Sabbath.

The fact that God is working through a different entity in no way supports or encourages antisemitism. We do not refer to the sons of Jacob as Christ-killers; we would be foolish to think that they no longer have any part in the plan of God. It would be wrong to see ourselves as superior or better than them, in any way. A child of Jacob can, today, believe in Jesus Christ, and many do. That person is eternally saved and he becomes a part of the church (the body of believers). When we encounter recalcitrant Jews—those who continue to reject Jesus Christ—then we bear them no animus and we pray for them. God wants all people to come to the knowledge of repentance (= a change of mind), regardless
of their racial or ethnic background (this promise extends to Arabs and Muslims, the drug addicted, and gays and even transgenders; there is no one for whom Christ did not die—no matter how repugnant they might be to us; no matter how much they have screwed up their own lives).

Essentially, everyone is on a level-playing field now, but it would be evil on our part to treat nation Israel or people descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as wrong, bad, or inferior. God wants to see every person saved, which includes every Jew. God’s promises concerning Israel have not been retracted. Those who bless Israel will still be blessed by God. Those who disparage the sons of Jacob will they themselves be cursed. That promise of God still stands and it means what it says it means.

When I use the term *Israel*, I will primarily be referring to the institution through which God worked between the very approximate dates of 2000 B.C. to the birth of Christ.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Israel and the Church</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Israel</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Church</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>What Israel would be was prophetically revealed by God to Abraham.</td>
<td>What the church would be is prophetically revealed by Jesus to His disciples at the Last Supper and later in the Garden of Gethsemane. There is no Old Testament prophecy about the church.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Israel began inauspiciously with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their descendants.</td>
<td>Begun with the Apostles on the day of Pentecost; at which time, they added many souls to the church.</td>
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<td>It is quite amazing that we know anything about Abraham at all, as he was a simple shepherd. What is key is, he was a shepherd who followed God’s calling.</td>
<td>The church had an amazing ride into the consciousness and history of Rome. The church (the body of people who believed in Jesus Christ) grew at a phenomenal rate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whereas, most of mankind had no idea who Abraham was during his life, he is the most well-known person of his era, eclipsing the history and reputation of all kings and warriors contemporary to him.</td>
<td>Whereas, the murder of Jesus was thought to destroy this movement, the growth of believers after Him was remarkable. The literature written by His disciples in the first century is the best selling literature of all time—even today.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attacks on Abraham and the Abrahamic line were quite subtle. Abraham seemed to try to live at peace with all men, if possible.</td>
<td>Persecution of the church was also remarkable. Thousands, if not millions, of people were killed by Rome for the crime of being Christian.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Israel</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Church</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Israel was and is a very specific people in a very specific genetic line (although others were able to join them, beginning in the Exodus era). Those outsiders who willingly became a part of Israel worshiped their God.</td>
<td>Becoming a member of the church is related directly to choosing to place your faith in Jesus Christ, Who is the Living God and not a dead martyr.</td>
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<td>Israel was clearly associated with a specific piece of land. God told Abraham to move to that piece of land. God later told Jacob (Abraham’s grandson) to leave this land—but with the knowledge that his people would return to it. Even today, Israel is associated with that same specific plot of ground.</td>
<td>The church, a body of believers, is not associated with any specific piece of land. Rome was first nation associated with the church. However, more recently, Spain, Ireland, Scotland, and England were associated with the church; and today, the United States is. In the Middle East today, the United States is synonymous with Christianity in their perception.</td>
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<td>Israel was originally associated with specific rituals, like circumcision, festival days, and animal sacrifice. The people of Israel today are associated primarily with circumcision and the Passover (known today as the Seder), although they celebrate other holidays as well.</td>
<td>The church is associated with only one specific ritual, which is the Lord’s Supper. Although many churches practice baptism, this ritual is less universal in how it is observed (and a few churches do not observe this ritual at all).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abraham was given the Abrahamic covenant; which is repeated by God to Isaac and Jacob. Then God gave them the Mosaic Law; and then God gave David the Davidic Covenant.</td>
<td>The church is given the Holy Spirit and the epistles of the Apostles to guide them. Although we study the entire Bible, our specific Church Age practices come out of the epistles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The covenants of God to Israel are promises which God made to Israel. These promises have not been completely fulfilled, either in the past or in today's world.</td>
<td>The doctrines and practices of the church are found almost entirely in the epistles (letters written by Paul, John, Peter and others);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel is given judges, kings, prophets and priests as their authorities. These men have different functions, and each represents the Messiah in one way or another.</td>
<td>The early church was first given the Apostles, who had absolute and ultimate authority. There are no Apostles today. Every believer in the Church Age is a priest, having authority over his own life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Israel and the Church</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Israel</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Church</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judges, kings, prophets and priests are all related to nation Israel. Judges and kings led nation Israel; but prophets had God’s authority and they had authority over judges and kings.</td>
<td>The early spiritual gifts were designed for the building up of the church. The current spiritual gifts are given to local churches. Although some men with the gift of evangelism or pastor-teacher have had close relationships with presidents; this is never their primary function.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These authorities were only for ancient Israel. The modern nation Israel has a different set of authorities. The sons of Jacob (Israel), scattered throughout the world, are subject to the governmental authorities where they live. Even nation Israel today is essentially a secular government.</td>
<td>Properly and doctrinally, the authority in post-Apostolic church is the Bible. The authority in a local church is the pastor-teacher. In modern practice, there are other authorities, but these are not found in the Bible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel is associated with the Law of Moses and the writings of the prophets.</td>
<td>The church is associated with the gospel of Jesus Christ and the epistles of the New Testament.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During the era or dispensation of Israel, people were saved by believing in the Revealed God (that is, God, as He revealed Himself to Israel). Today, we know Him as Jesus.</td>
<td>People are saved by believing in Jesus. Every person who believes in Jesus has very limited information about Him at the point of faith in Him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It makes very little sense to try to jumble together ancient Israel with the church begun at Pentecost, and try to make them into the same entity. What they have in common is, God worked (and works) through these two separate entities.</td>
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</table>

Jesus lived during the time of the Mosaic Law; He lived in the Age of Israel. However, there are some unique aspects to the time during which He lived. Probably the two things which stand out are (1) Jesus test-drove the Christian way of life for us; that is, He lived by the guidance and power of God the Holy Spirit (which required Jesus to know the Old Testament); and (2) Jesus’ disciples could have, at any time, asked for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

What makes the time of Jesus separate from the Age of Israel and the Church Age is, God was on earth as a Person. Jesus was the only authority at that time. The Bible was the Old Testament, but Jesus was able to properly interpret them, apart from the wrong-headed religious views of His day.
During the life of Jesus, the priests of Israel had totally corrupted their authority; the church did not exist; and the future Apostles were, at this time, under the training and teaching of Jesus. This period of time is sometimes called the Age (or dispensation) of the Hypostatic Union.

The term *hypostatic union* refers to the two natures of Christ (divine and human) being united in One Person. This was not to original meaning or use of the word hypostasis (ὑπόστασις) [pronounced hoop- OSS-tas-is]. Hupostasis was Greek term later taken and used to represent the two natures of Christ in the 4th or 5th centuries. Originally, hupostasis meant (concretely) *essence*, (or abstractly) *assurance*. Strong’s #5287. At some point in the future, we will cover this doctrine; but it can be found [here](#). One of the first times this term is used in this technical sense is by Athanasius (298–373 A.D.), a bishop of Alexandria (Egypt), in the fourth century.

It is key to understand that, in the Church Age, the Holy Spirit alone is not very helpful. The Holy Spirit requires some of the believer: Bible doctrine in their soul. Think of the Holy Spirit as the gas for your car. If you don't have a car, the gas is not going to get you anywhere. The better vehicle that you have, the more bang that you will get for your buck, so to speak, regarding the gas. Think of our vehicle as being the Bible doctrine in our souls. A person with no Bible doctrine is like a man with a 5 gallon pail of gas who expects to go somewhere. You can't go anywhere without a car.


The person who wrote the most of the New Testament is not Paul, who wrote 13 epistles; nor it is John, who wrote the Gospel of John, the Revelation and 3 epistles; but it is Luke, the only Gentile to write any portion of the Bible—with the possible exceptions of whoever wrote the first 10 chapters of Genesis and possibly the book of Job, books which were written before God distinguished between Jews and Gentile (or so, we think about Job).

Matthew, Mark and Luke are known as the synoptic gospels, which means that they cover many similar events in roughly the same order. However, there are many sections and chapters of the book of Luke which are unique.

Although the historical biography of Jesus, as laid out by Luke, is for the most part, chronological, it is not perfectly so. There are at least two chronological Bibles that I am aware of: F. LaGard Smith’s *The Narrated Bible* and *The Reese Chronology Bible*. These two books present similar chronologies, but they are not in complete agreement.

References will be made below to other significant events not recorded by Luke.
Luke’s presentation is quite interesting. He gives the early history of Jesus, the details on his public ministry; and then Luke just packs a few chapters with what Jesus taught; mostly without reference to place or circumstance. Then, at the end, Luke resumes the narrative of the final days of the Lord’s public ministry; and His final entry into Jerusalem, followed by the last Passover, the betrayal, the trials, the crucifixion, the resurrection and finally, the ascension. The middle section of teaching may or may not be in some sort of order.

If at any time you feel as if you are getting lost in the details of a passage, you may return to this chart in order to have an overall (or bird’s eye) view of what is taking place.

If two passages are similar or the content of Jesus’ teaching is similar, but the circumstances are probably different, then I placed the parallel passage in parentheses. Unless otherwise noted, passages quoted are from the ESV; capitalized.

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1b</td>
<td>Luke 1:5–25</td>
<td>Before Jesus’ birth: The angel Gabriel appears to Zacharias in the Temple and tells him that he and his wife Elisabeth will have a son in their old age—John the Baptist (better, John the herald). Zacharias seems to doubt the vision/experience and is struck dumb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1c</td>
<td>Luke 1:26–38</td>
<td>This same angel also appears to Mary and tells her that she will have a Son Whom she will name Jesus. The angel also tells her about Elisabeth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1d</td>
<td>Luke 1:39–56</td>
<td>Mary goes to visit Elisabeth, a relative. While she is there, Mary composes a song about the Son she will bear. She returns to her home after sharing this song with Elisabeth.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

There is a greater focus upon Mary in these early years in the book of Luke whereas Joseph’s pre-birth experiences will be found in Matthew. The genealogies in Matthew and Luke also reflect their respective emphases.

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<tr>
<td>1e</td>
<td>Luke 1:57–66</td>
<td>John the Baptist is born and circumcised. That his name would be John (not a family name) is confirmed by his mute father.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1f</td>
<td>Luke 1:67–80</td>
<td>Zacharias, after declaring (on a tablet) that his son would be called John, can speak again, and he prophesies concerning the Savior to be born; and his son would go before the Savior and prepare the way.</td>
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Because John heralds the arrival of Jesus, he is better called John the Herald.
# Passage-by-Passage Summary of the Book of Luke

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>The entire narrative of Luke 1 is unique; it is not found in the other gospels.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>The narrative about an angel of God which appears to Joseph and tells him to continue with his marriage to Mary, despite her being pregnant (Matt. 1:18–25a)—is not found in Luke. Matthew focuses on Joseph, the legal father of Jesus; Luke focuses on Mary, the actual mother of Jesus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a</td>
<td>Luke 2:1–7</td>
<td><strong>The Birth of Jesus:</strong> Jesus is born to Mary while they are in Bethlehem. Because there was no room for them in the Inn (many had come there to be taxed), she gave birth to the Lord in the stables. A feeding trough was the Child’s bed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b</td>
<td>Luke 2:8–20</td>
<td>An angel came to some shepherds in a field and told them of the Christ child being born that day. They go to find the Christ Child and to worship Him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2c</td>
<td>Luke 2:21–24</td>
<td>Jesus is circumcised and then presented at the Temple to be dedicated to God as the child who opens the womb. Matt. 1:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2d</td>
<td>Luke 2:25–38</td>
<td><strong>The Witness of Simeon and Anna:</strong> A devout man, Simeon, knows by the Holy Spirit that he will see the Lord’s Messiah before his death. He is there when Mary and Joseph bring their child to the Temple to be dedicated. Simeon recognizes the Child and prophesies. Anna, a prophetess, also bears witness to the Child at the Temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2e</td>
<td>Luke 2:39–40</td>
<td>Joseph and Mary return to Nazareth, their home. The Child grows, strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and God’s grace is upon Him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2f</td>
<td>Luke 2:41–52</td>
<td>At age 12, Jesus amazes the religious scholars of Jerusalem. Jesus continues to advance in wisdom and stature.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Joseph and Mary first go to Egypt to escape the decree of Herod the Great to slaughter all Jewish male children 2 years or younger. Because of this, there would be few (if any) Jewish males in Judah of Jesus’ age. Matt. 2:1–18

The narrative of Luke 2 is unique, with the exception of the naming of the Christ Child.
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<tr>
<td>3b</td>
<td>Luke 3:23–38</td>
<td><strong>The genealogy of Mary</strong> is traced back to Adam (and to God).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This small portion of text is not completely in chronological order. John’s ministry is followed to the point of being arrested by Herod the Tetrarch; but then we go back to when John baptized Jesus (which leads into the genealogy of Jesus).

The genealogy in Matthew is Joseph’s. He is traced back to Abraham, as Matthew emphasizes the fulfillment of prophecy of the Jewish Messiah. Matthew’s line is traced back to David through Solomon; and Mary’s line is traced back to David through Nathan (David’s son). There is a very important theological reason for this.

<p>| 4a      | Luke 4:1–13 | <strong>The Temptation of Jesus:</strong> After Jesus has fasted for 40 days, Satan tempts Him. Jesus answers each temptation with the Word of God. Matt. 4:1–11  Mark 1:12–13 |
| 4c      | Luke 4:16–30 | <strong>Jesus Rejected at Nazareth.</strong> Jesus does an amazing reading of Scripture in a Nazarene synagogue, where every eye is upon Him. The people respond to His words with great anger (He added a brief explanatory comment after sitting down). They took Him to a hill to cast Him off to kill Him. He escaped, passing through their midst. |
| 4f      | Luke 4:40–41 | Jesus heals many who are sick, and also casts out demons. Matt. 8:16–17  Mark 1:32–34 |
| 4g      | Luke 4:42–44 | When Jesus goes out to the desert-wilderness, people find Him and come to Him. Mark 1:35–39 |</p>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>John writes of Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip and Nathanael being called in John 1:35–51. Luke writes of Simon, James and John being called in Luke 5. These do not sound like the same series of events, suggesting that Simon-Peter may have been called twice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5b</td>
<td>Luke 5:12–16</td>
<td>Still in the Galilean area, Jesus cleanses a leper. Matt. 8:2–4 Mark 1:40–45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5c</td>
<td>Luke 5:17–26</td>
<td>Jesus forgives and heals a paralytic. This is a man carried on a cot onto a roof and then lowered down before the Lord. Jesus forgiving the paralytic causes a great deal of consternation among those who witness this. Matt. 9:2–8 Mark 2:1–12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The incidents in Mark, Luke and Matthew are very similar with so many overlapping details as to appear to be the same incident. In Luke, Jesus appears to be in the Galilee area; and in Matthew, He is in Nazareth specifically (which is in the Galilee region) (Matt. 9:1). Mark undoubtedly records the same incident, as the paralytic is lowered down on a cot to Jesus because of a crowd (Mark 2:3–4). However, in Mark, He is said to be in Capernaum (Mark 2:1). The problem is, in Matt. 9:1, Jesus is said to be entering into His Own city (which we would assume is Nazareth). If we weave together the text from Matthew and Mark, this problem appears to resolve itself.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Matt. 9:1 And getting into a boat He crossed over and came to His Own city. We read in Mark 2:1 And when He returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that He was at home. Capernaum is right on the shore of the Sea of Galilee; Nazareth is inland a significant ways from the sea. So what appears to be the resolution to this problem is, Jesus had a home in Capernaum and this was considered His Own city. Another explanation is, He was in Capernaum and he crossed over the Sea of Galilee, and then traveled to His family home in Nazareth, after some days of traveling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5d</td>
<td>Luke 5:27–32</td>
<td><strong>Matthew is called.</strong> Jesus calls Matthew, the tax collector, who then throws a great banquet to honor Jesus. Matt. 9:9–13 Mark 2:13–17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5e</td>
<td>Luke 5:33–39</td>
<td>The disciples question Jesus about fasting and Jesus explains to them the difference between His and John’s ministries. Matt. 9:14–17 Mark 2:18–22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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17 I will try to avoid solving every problem with parallel passages.
## Passage-by-Passage Summary of the Book of Luke

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Passage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6a</td>
<td>Luke 6:1–5</td>
<td><strong>The Pharisees Take Notice of the Lord’s Ministry and They Question Him:</strong> The Pharisees are aware of Jesus’ ministry, and they begin to question His lawless behavior (in their eyes) of eating grain which they had harvested themselves from a field on a Sabbath day. Matt. 12:1–8 Mark 2:23–28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6b</td>
<td>Luke 6:6–11</td>
<td><strong>The Pharisees begin to try to trap Jesus.</strong> Jesus heals a man on the Sabbath (placed before Him by the scribes and Pharisees to see if He would heal on the Sabbath). The plotting of the religious hierarchy against Jesus begins. Matt. 12:9–14 Mark 3:1–6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6c</td>
<td>Luke 6:12–16</td>
<td><strong>Jesus’ disciples</strong> are chosen and named. Matt. 10:1–4 Mark 3:13–19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6d</td>
<td>Luke 6:17–19</td>
<td>On the plain, Jesus heals a great multitude of people from Judæa, Jerusalem, Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and to be healed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6e</td>
<td>Luke 6:20–49</td>
<td>Jesus teaches the beatitudes and pronounces woes upon certain sets of people. He explains that they should love their enemies, that they should not judge others, and that a tree is known by its fruit. They are to build upon the foundation of a rock and not upon sand. Many of these things were taught using parables. (Matt. 5:1–12, 38–48 7:1–5, 15–27)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even though the content of the sermon on the plain (Luke 6:20–49) and the sermon on the mount (Matt. 5–7) are very similar, there is no reason to assume that these took place at the same time and place. The book of Matthew includes more teaching than Luke does (significant portions of Matt. 5–7 are not found in Luke).

<p>| 7a      | Luke 7:1–10 | <strong>Significant miracle #1:</strong> Healing the Centurion’s servant while in Capernaum. Both the Centurion and his servant would have been gentiles. Matt. 8:5–13 |
| 7b      | Luke 7:11–17 | <strong>Significant miracle #2:</strong> Jesus raised the son of a widow from the dead. |
| 7c      | Luke 7:18–35 | John the baptizer sends messengers to Jesus, asking if He is the true Messiah. Jesus speaks to John’s ministry. Matt. 11:2–19 |</p>
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7d</td>
<td>Luke 7:36–50</td>
<td>Jesus gives the parable of the debtor and then forgives a woman who is washing His feet for her sins.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There appear to be 2 or 3 occasions when Jesus' feet are washed and perfumed. This occurs in the house of Simon the Leper, possibly towards the end of the Lord's public ministry (Matt. 26:6–13 Mark 14:3–9). We have a similar event which takes place at the home of Simon, the pharisee (Luke 7:36–50). Even though Jesus has a similar message, it is much different in Luke 7; and this appears to have occurred early on in His ministry (it is less likely that a pharisee would have entertained Jesus in His home near the end of His ministry).

Mary washes and perfumes the Lord’s feet in John 12:1–8, which is specifically said to take place 6 days prior to the Passover. The narrative in John has certain elements which substantially add to the telling of the ones in Matthew and Mark. I believe that the Matthew, Mark and John events can be seen as the same event. Given their locations in those books, this incident clearly occurs near the end of the Lord’s public ministry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8a</th>
<th>Luke 8:1–3</th>
<th>Teaching and healing in all the cities and villages: A list of the women who were with Jesus.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Luke apparently put much of his biography together using the eyewitness testimony of many of the Lord’s female disciples.

|---------|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

There is no doubt that Jesus re-taught some information, as the crowds of people before whom He spoke were not always the same (although His core disciples were probably fairly consistent). Therefore, we may have the same teachings found in several gospels, but they do not necessarily represent the same event—just the same material.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8c</th>
<th>Luke 8:19–21</th>
<th>Jesus’ mother and brothers come to see Him, but are unable to get close to Him for the crowd. Matt. 12:46–50 Mark 3:31–35 4:21–25</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8d</th>
<th>Luke 8:22–25</th>
<th>When in a boat in the water, the wind and waves obey the commands of Jesus. Matt. 8:23–27 Mark 4:35–41</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

|---------|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

<p>| 8f      | Luke 8:40–56 | The dying daughter of Jairus; the woman who touches Him, and is healed; the daughter of Jairus dies, but is raised up from the dead by Jesus. Matt. 9:18–26 Mark 5:21–43 |</p>
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9b</td>
<td>Luke 9:7–9</td>
<td>Herod the tetrarch seeks to speak with Jesus, given the odd rumors that he has been hearing. Matt. 14:1–2 Mark 6:14–16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9d</td>
<td>Luke 9:18–26</td>
<td>Jesus with the disciples. Peter confesses that Jesus is the Messiah; Jesus predicts His death; Jesus tells them to take up their cross and follow Him. Matt. 16:13–27 Mark 8:27–38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9e</td>
<td>Luke 9:27–36</td>
<td><strong>The Mount of Transfiguration.</strong> 3 disciples see this and they hear the voice of God. They were told to keep this quiet and to not mention it. Matt. 16:28  17:1–13 Mark 9:1–13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9g</td>
<td>Luke 9:43b–45</td>
<td><strong>Jesus speaking to His disciples.</strong> He tells them again that he will be delivered into the hands of man. Matt. 17:22–23 Mark 9:30–32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9j</td>
<td>Luke 9:51–56</td>
<td>Jesus wants to go into a Samaritan village and He sent some messengers as an advance team, but the people of the village would not receive Jesus into their village. Matt. 19:1–2 Mark 10:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10a</td>
<td>Luke 10:1–12</td>
<td><strong>The 70 are sent out.</strong> Possible parallels found in Matt. 10:1–16 Mark 6:7–13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10b</td>
<td>Luke 10:13–16</td>
<td>Woes to Chorazin, Bethsaida, Tyre and Sidon; as well as Capernaum. Matt. 11:20–24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Passage-by-Passage Summary of the Book of Luke

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10c</td>
<td>Luke 10:17–20</td>
<td>The 70 return and they are jazzed over their power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10d</td>
<td>Luke 10:21–24</td>
<td>Jesus rejoices and prays at this same time, apparently as a response to the reports given by the 70. Matt. 11:25–27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At this point in Luke’s biography, Luke emphasizes the **teaching of Jesus** more than anything else. Some individual incidents are recalled, but very often, in such a way that they lead to the teaching of a particular principle or parable. It is unclear whether these teachings and parables are presented in any sort of an order. Luke 10–18 is nearly all teaching.

Allow me to reiterate that Jesus, no doubt, taught similar material in different places. As a clear example of this, He told His disciples on several occasions that He would suffer and die at the hands of the pharisees and Romans.

### 10e Luke 10:25–28
**The Teachings of Jesus:** The greatest commandment. Matt. 22:34–40 Mark 12:28–34

### 10f Luke 10:29–37
The parable of the good Samaritan.

### 10g Luke 10:38–42
Mary and Martha.

### 11a Luke 11:1–4
Jesus teaches His disciples how to pray. Matt. 6:9-15 appears to be the same prayer, but said on a different occasion.

### 11b Luke 11:5–8
A parable of the friend who comes to Midnight.

### 11c Luke 11:9–13
A second and third parable: Keep on knocking; keep on asking. What about a son who asks his father for a fish? Matthew 7:7-11

F. LaGard Smith places the rest of this chapter earlier in the Lord’s ministry. We should note that Jesus likely taught the same material at different times. So some parallel passages may not have actually occurred at the same time.

When Jesus was accused of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub; Jesus explains that a house divided cannot stand. Matt. 12:22–28 Mark 3:20–26

### 11e Luke 11:21–23

### 11f Luke 11:24–26
The unclean spirit returns. Matt. 12:43–45

### 11g Luke 11:27–28
The impolite, interrupting woman.

### 11h Luke 11:29–32
This generation seeks a sign; the story of Jonah will be a sign for them. Matt. 12:38–42 Mark 8:11–12
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Large portions of Luke 12–18 are not found elsewhere in the other gospels.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12a</td>
<td>Luke 12:1–3</td>
<td>Jesus teaches the multitude that everything that has been done will be revealed. Matthew 10:26–27</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mark 16:5–6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12c</td>
<td>Luke 12:8–10</td>
<td>Jesus tells them to confess Him before men; and warns against blaspheming against the Holy Spirit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12d</td>
<td>Luke 12:11–12</td>
<td>The Holy Spirit helps guide us in what we speak when we have been persecuted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Matthew 10:17–20 Mark 13:9–11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12f</td>
<td>Luke 12:22–34</td>
<td>God takes care of the most insignificant things; and therefore, He will look after us. The disciples were</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>not to depend upon earth’s treasures. (Matt. 6:19–21, 25–34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12g</td>
<td>Luke 12:35–48</td>
<td>The servants of the Lord are to watch and wait for the Lord.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The faithful and the unfaithful servant. Matt. 24:45–51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12h</td>
<td>Luke 12:49–53</td>
<td>Jesus has come to bring division on earth. (Matt. 10:34–39 may represent similar teaching at another time.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12i</td>
<td>Luke 12:54–56</td>
<td>People are able to see the signs of the weather; why are they unable to see the signs of the time? Matt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16:2–3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12j</td>
<td>Luke 12:57–59</td>
<td>We are told to settle our debts and make things right, even with our adversaries. Matt. 5:25–26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13c</td>
<td>Luke 13:10–17</td>
<td>Jesus heals a woman of an unclean, indwelling spirit on the Sabbath. He is challenged for working on the</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sabbath and He provides a stiff retort.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Passage</td>
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<tr>
<td>14b</td>
<td>Luke 14:7–11</td>
<td>Sitting at the less-conspicuous place during an event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14c</td>
<td>Luke 14:12–14</td>
<td>Making a dinner and then calling the lame, the blind and the poor to attend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14f</td>
<td>Luke 14:28–30</td>
<td>Considering the cost or the work involved before proceeding forward with a project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jesus ends this discourse saying, &quot;And behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.&quot; He also ends his parable of the laborers in the field with those words. Matt. 20:1–16 Mark 10:31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14g</td>
<td>Luke 14:31–33</td>
<td>Jesus is warned by a pharisee about Herod the Fox.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14h</td>
<td>Luke 14:34–35</td>
<td>Salt which has lost its savor. (Matt. 5:13) Mark 9:49–50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15b</td>
<td>Luke 15:8–10</td>
<td>Parable of the lost coin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16b</td>
<td>Luke 16:14–17</td>
<td>The law, the prophets and the kingdom.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{18}\) Bible resource suggests Matt. 19:9 and Mark 10:11–12 only.
<table>
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Although Jesus continues to teach, the narrative of His life becomes more prominent in the rest of the book of Luke. The emphasis of the remainder of Luke appears to begin with His final week in Jerusalem.

Matt. 9:27–31 appears to be a different event.

| 19a     | Luke 19:1–10  | Jesus comes to the home of Zacchaeus, the short man.                                                        |

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The Lord cleansed the Temple near the beginning of His public ministry and then again at the end. John 2:13–17 represents the first time that Jesus did this.

Most of the Lord’s teaching which follows focuses on 3 sets of topics: the failure of the scribes and pharisees to preserve the teachings of Scripture; the end times; the final persecution of Jesus and His suffering of the cross.

|---------|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

It should be apparent just how closely tied Jesus’ teaching here is to the narrative of the animus of the religious hierarchy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>20c</th>
<th>Luke 20:20–26</th>
<th>Jesus is questioned by the Pharisees, asking if it is lawful to pay taxes the Cæsar. Matt. 22:15–22 Mark 12:13–17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>21g</td>
<td>Luke 21:34–38</td>
<td>Watching for the end times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22a</td>
<td>Luke 22:1–2</td>
<td>The Passover is near; and there is a plot afoot to kill Jesus. Matt. 26:1–5  Mark 14:1–2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The passages in Matthew and Mark seem to be preceded by the mother of James and John coming in and requesting a place of honor in heaven for her two sons. Matt. 20:20–23  Mark 10:35–40. There appear to have been arguments and disagreements about who was the greatest disciple on several occasions.

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>John 19:5 mentions the magnificent robe that Herod placed upon Jesus, making fun of Him. John does not speak of its origin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23f</td>
<td>Luke 23:26–32</td>
<td>Jesus is led away to be crucified (the road to Golgotha). Jesus teaches about the horrors which will befall Jerusalem (which is not found in the parallel passages). Matt. 27:31b–32 Mark 15:20b–21 John 19:17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Passage-by-Passage Summary of the Book of Luke

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<tr>
<td>24b</td>
<td>Luke 24:13–32</td>
<td>The risen Christ teaches two on the road to Emmaus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24e</td>
<td>Luke 24:50–53</td>
<td>The Ascension: Jesus ascends into heaven. Mark 16:15, 19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Bibliography**

I used many of the *Niobi Study Bible* divisions and headings above. Similarly helpful: *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword. They were one of my sources for parallel passages. *The Narrated Bible In Chronological Order*; narrated by F. LaGard Smith; ©1984 by Harvest House Publishers; Eugene, Oregon; (NIV ©1984 by the International Bible Society); p. 1353–1484. Bible Research *Parallels, Parallels 2*; and *Parallels 3*; accessed September 29, 2018. These pages link, quite conveniently, to Bible gateway parallel passages in each instance.

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This will be the final introductory lesson before we actually begin the book of Luke. However, we should take just a little time to discuss the Person Whom we will study, Jesus of Nazareth. Based upon biographical facts of His life that we know about, we should not even know Who this Man is.

He was born to a working class family. His father was a carpenter. Although sometimes their poorness is overemphasized, in my opinion, they were certainly not a rich couple; nor were they a family of note. When they went to pay their taxes, which required them to leave their home in Nazareth, and go to a centralized area, they ended up in Bethlehem, where the wife gave birth to Jesus. It would make sense that they owned some property and/or made some amount of money; which would explain why they had to pay taxes. Obviously, there were no exemptions granted for a pregnant wife.
When Jesus was born, they traveled to Egypt, believing their Son to be in danger of being killed by Herod. Later, this small family returned to Judæa when they believed it to be safe. Jesus grew up in Nazareth, apparently trained as a carpenter by His father.

Jesus apparently had a great interest in the Old Testament Scriptures (simply known as the *Scriptures*); and, at some point, Jesus began teaching. His public ministry only lasted for 3 or 4 years. He never wrote anything down, He did not write an autobiography. He did not write down a set of His teachings to distribute to those who might be interested. He simply went from synagogue to synagogue to teach; and many times, He was not well-received. On occasion, His life was threatened, even though no one appeared to be able to present a credible theological argument against what Jesus was teaching.

Most of His teaching was about the Scriptures; and most of the time, anything that He taught could be found elsewhere in the Word of God. Very often, He found Himself in opposition to the scribes, pharisees and lawyers of that day, primarily because their teachings were based upon traditions and extra-Scriptural regulations and not upon the accepted Scriptures. Based upon the biographical material that we have, the so-called experts in the Mosaic Law had trouble opposing Him if arguing from the Scriptures alone.

Jesus was not a man of distinction by birth; He was rejected by the religious scholars of His day—in fact, they saw to it that He was executed. Although He apparently taught for lengthy periods of time, all of his teaching took place over a period of 3 or 4 years; and He traveled perhaps a 100 miles or so. In fact, most of His public ministry occurred within a 30 mile radius of His hometown or of His birthplace.

Given these few details, it is a wonder that we have any idea Who this Man was. Remarkably, 4 men wrote about Him. 2 men who knew Him intimately (they were among His followers) and 2 men who apparently did not know Jesus personally, but became followers of Him after His death and subsequent resurrection and ascension.

It is because of these 4 men and His other followers that we know Who Jesus is. Although there are 4 gospel writers, there are also 6 different men who wrote the epistles (letters) (I am assuming that the writer of Hebrews is different from the other 5 men). This gives us at least 8 and possibly 9 different men who testified to the Person and teachings of Jesus. At the same time, we have no one from this same era disputing their biographies or letters (Josephus, a Jewish historian in this era, would have been the most likely person to cast aspersions on the Person of Jesus, but he does not).

The opposition to Him was so fierce that they killed Jesus; but none of these scholars, insofar as we know, produced any writings to contradict Jesus’ biographies, His teachings, His miracles; or the teachings of His followers (which teachings were clearly not exactly the same as the Lord’s).

Josephus is not the only historian to mention Jesus. However, he is certainly the most well-known historian of that era.
CONCERNING ALBINUS UNDER WHOSE PROCURATORSHIP JAMES WAS SLAIN; AS ALSO WHAT EDIFICES WERE BUILT BY AGRIPPA.

1. AND now Caesar, upon hearing the death of Festus, sent Albinus into Judea, as procurator. But the king deprived Joseph of the high priesthood, and bestowed the succession to that dignity on the son of Ananus, who was also himself called Ananus. Now the report goes that this eldest Ananus proved a most fortunate man; for he had five sons who had all performed the office of a high priest to God, and who had himself enjoyed that dignity a long time formerly, which had never happened to any other of our high priests. But this younger Ananus, who, as we have told you already, took the high priesthood, was a bold man in his temper, and very insolent; he was also of the sect of the Sadducees, who are very rigid in judging offenders, above all the rest of the Jews, as we have already observed; when, therefore, Ananus was of this disposition, he thought he had now a proper opportunity [to exercise his authority].

Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the sanhedrim of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, or, some of his companions; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned: but as for those who seemed the most equitable of the citizens, and such as were the most uneasy at the breach of the laws, they disliked what was done; they also sent to the king [Agrippa], desiring him to send to Ananus that he should act no more, for that what he had already done was not to be justified; nay, some of them went also to meet Albinus, as he was upon his journey from Alexandria, and informed him that it was not lawful for Ananus to assemble a sanhedrim without his consent. Whereupon Albinus complied with what they said, and wrote in anger to Ananus, and threatened that he would bring him to punishment for what he had done; on which king Agrippa took the high priesthood from him, when he had ruled but three months, and made Jesus, the son of Damneus, high priest.

It hence evidently appears that Sadducees might be high priests in the days of Josephus, and that these Sadducees were usually very severe and inexorable judges, while the Pharisees were much milder, and more merciful, as appears by Reland's instances in his note on this place, and on Josephus's Life, sect. 31, and those taken from the New Testament, from Josephus himself, and from the Rabbins; nor do we meet with any Sadducees later than this high priest in all Josephus.

Of this condemnation of James the Just, and its causes, as also that he did not die till long afterwards, see Prim. Christ. Revived, vol. III. ch. 43-46. The sanhedrim condemned our Savior, but could not put him to death without the approbation of the Roman procurator; nor could therefore Ananias and his sanhedrim do more here, since they never had Albinus's approbation for the putting this James to death.

Emphasis mine. As you can see, this reference to Jesus is an aside, where the focus is on the execution of his half brother, James. Quite frankly, given Jesus’ very limited ministry, this is the sort of historical mention that we would expect.
Josephus’s mentions of Jesus the Christ

There is also an account given by Josephus of Jesus and Pilate, which includes this quotation: *Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross,*[9] those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; *for he appeared to them alive again the third day,*[10] *as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.*  *Antiquities Book XVIII 3.3*

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I have also read accusations that Christians got a hold of Josephus’s writings and corrupted them. I clearly could not say with certainty one way or the other.

What appears to be the case is, the first reference is not disputed, but the second one is. But again, what is most important is, Josephus, if anyone, would have disputed the stories of Jesus if (1) there was a big movement concerning Him (there was) and (2) if there was evidence that these recollections were false. But, we do not have that.

Could Christians have edited Josephus? Possibly. Could they have removed any disparaging material? Possibly. However, this would have been unlikely early on, at the beginning of the church, as so much energy and effort was expended upon spreading the name of Jesus (even the disciples did not begin writing biographies of Jesus until 20–30 years after the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension). There was a considerable length of time before the church grew to a point of being a strong force in the Roman world (100–300 years).

The longer that those of the church waited to corrupt Josephus’ works (assuming that they did), the more difficult this task would have been, as there were certainly copies of Josephus’ history scattered throughout the Roman empire.

In addition, if you read and reread the second passage from Josephus, the information is still quite limited and not written necessarily in such a way as to present Jesus Christ as the Savior of all mankind.

These words of Josephus, although they do not confirm that Jesus is the Christ, they clearly attest to His historicity, in such a way that, we should not be surprised that this is a movement.
We may reasonably ask ourselves 2 questions when it comes to the possible corruption of Josephus’ manuscripts with information about Jesus: (1) how were the Christians able to get a hold of every Josephus manuscript and change it; or how did they insure that, only manuscripts that they approved of survived? Why don’t we find contradictory manuscripts? (2) Why is the recording of the information about Jesus so reserved? Why aren’t there more enthusiastic references? How could they know that, these subtle and limited references to Jesus would seem more believable 2000 years later than resurrection to eyewitness accounts of His ministry?

Despite His Own limited ministry, Jesus is the most well-known Person in human history. He is known by name in virtually every country on earth. Man’s history is divided, roughly, by His birth (what occurs before is before Christ; and what occurs after is in the year of our Lord). Even when people reject Him, many of them cannot seem to help themselves when it comes to using His name in a trite and exclamatory way—often on a daily basis.

Dr. J. Francis expressed this much better than I have:

**The Influence of the Man Jesus (Dr. James Allan Francis)**

It was Dr. James Allan Francis who penned the following words that aptly describe the influence of Jesus through the history of mankind:

"Here is a man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village. He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty. Then for three years He was an itinerant preacher.

"He never owned a home. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put His foot inside a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place He was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but Himself. . . .

"While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against Him. His friends ran away. One of them denied Him. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed upon a cross between two thieves. While He was dying His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth—His coat. When He was dead, He was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

"Nineteen long centuries have come and gone, and today He is a centerpiece of the human race and leader of the column of progress.

"I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, all the navies that were ever built; all the parliaments that ever sat and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that one solitary life."
What we will study is one of the biographies of Jesus. Although we will bring in other information from His other biographies, we will primarily concentrate on what Luke said about the Lord.

Luke focuses more upon the humanity of Jesus than any of the other gospels, but without setting aside His Kingship or Deity. The biological mother of Jesus and Jesus’ childhood are given a great deal of attention by Luke as compared the Lord’s other biographers. Various ceremonies applied to Jesus the infant are also found here, but nowhere else. Also, the line Jesus, through Mary, is documented all the way back to Adam (actually, all the way back to God). Luke 3:23–38

Every gospel has its own personality, if you will; and its own emphases.

**Themes in the Book of Luke (Dr. Stephen Bramer)**

- A particular interest in poverty and wealth (1:52-53  4:16-22  6:20, 24-25  12:13-21  14:12-13  19:19-31) [some wealthy are noted among Jesus’ followers; however, He seems closest to the poor]
- Concern for individuals, especially “sinners” (e.g. the “good Samaritan” – 10:29-37; the prodigal son – 15:11-32; the thankful leper – 17:11-19; the penitent tax collector – 18:9-14; Zacchaeus – 19:1-10; the penitent thief – 23:39-43)
- An emphasis upon the family circle whereby Jesus’ activity included men, women and children, with the setting frequently in the home
- Repeated use of the title “Son of Man” (e.g. 19:10)
- Emphasis on joy (1:14) and the Holy Spirit (4:1)


I have been quite impressed with the Greek of Luke; and sometimes think that I should have gone with the simpler Greek of John.

**Literary Features of Particular Note (Stephen Ellis)**

Luke’s Gospel account is a unique Gospel account in several ways –

- Luke’s language reflects an outstanding command of the Greek language. His vocabulary is extensive and his style sometimes approximates that of classical Greek (e.g. 1:1-4), yet at other times it is Semitic (1:5-2:52) – often in a style similar to the Septuagint. Luke even reflects a cultural sensitivity by adapting his
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literary Features of Particular Note (Stephen Ellis)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>language to the people and setting described, e.g. when he refers to Peter in a Jewish setting, he uses more Semitic language than when he refers to Paul in a Hellenistic setting.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gospel of Luke is a carefully researched and documented writing with a comprehensive scope that extends from Jesus’ birth to His ascension. The arrangement is orderly, appeals to both Jews and Gentiles and is characterized by literary excellence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is the only Gospel that has a sequel, i.e. the book of Acts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only the Gospel of Luke includes an account of the Ascension (also included in the Book of Acts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke is the longest of the four Gospels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke records a wide variety of miracles, teaching, and parables resulting in the fullest portrait of Jesus’ ministry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke is the only Gospel addressed to an individual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a physician, Luke shows a particular interest in medical matters (4:38; 7:15; 8:55; 14:2; 18:15; 22:50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four beautiful hymns (the four original Christmas carols) are found at the beginning of Luke’s gospel:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o The Magnificat of Mary (1:46-55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o The Benedictus of Zachariah (1:68-79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Gloria in Excelsis Deo of the angels (2:14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Nunc Dimittis [permission to depart] of Simeon (2:29-32)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I should point out that there are significant portions of the book of Luke which are not found in any of the gospels. This would be all of chapter 1; most of chapter 2; all of chapters 9–10.

From [Steve Ellis](#); accessed October 24, 2018.
Many have composed one-page overviews of the book of Luke. Two of them can be found below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Gospel of Luke Chart #1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking and Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Copied from [Conforming to Jesus](#); accessed November 21, 2018.
# Luke Chart #2

## Presenting Jesus as the Son of Man

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Preface</th>
<th>Announced and Appearing</th>
<th>Ministering and Serving</th>
<th>Instructing and Submitting</th>
<th>Resurrected and Commissioning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jesus, the Nazarene...a prophet...</strong></td>
<td>“...mighty in deed...”</td>
<td>...mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.” (24:19)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


| Uniqueness | Unique | About 90% unique to Luke | About 60% unique to Luke | | |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Coming</th>
<th>Seeking</th>
<th>Saving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Bethlehem, Nazareth and Judæa</td>
<td>Galilee</td>
<td>Judæa and Perea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>About 30 years</td>
<td>1½ years</td>
<td>6 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theme**: Jesus is the ideal Man, Who comes to save all humankind—Jew and Gentile alike.

**Key verse**: Luke 19:10  “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” (ESV; capitalized)

**Christ in Luke**: Jesus is the Perfect God-man, who comes to offer salvation to all mankind.

Copied from Insight for Living; accessed November 21, 2018 (edited).
Having a map as a reference is very important. One of the amazing things about the ministry of our Lord is, He proclaimed His message to a very small population over a relatively small region.

The area that Jesus walked in and ministered to was somewhat smaller than the state of New Jersey, the 5th smallest state in the United States.

The book of Luke begins somewhere between 6–4 B.C. Although the birth of Jesus properly divides history, there was a screw up with the calendars, so that His birth does not occur between 1 B.C. and A.D. 1. Today’s calculation of A.D. and B.C. falls on the shoulders of a 6th century monk named Dennis the Short (more properly, Dionysius Exiguus).

His intention was to devise a calendar to begin with Jesus’ birth as A.D. 1. Using both the Gregorian and the adjusted Julian calendars, Dionysius calculated backwards to the birth of Jesus, placing His birth at A.D. 1 (there is no year 020). No one apparently seems to know how exactly he calculated his calendar, but he appears to have established the consulship of Probius Junior as A.D. 525. This particular dating method was later popularized by the Venerable Bede of Durham, England in the 8th century. At some point in time, it became clear that Dionysus’ reasoning was defective (or, perhaps the fault is with the historical documents upon which he depended); but, by that time, the calendar had

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20 A.D. and B.C. do not look like the number line which we learned in school.
been accepted. Even though there are other calendars established in the world with different start dates, this calendar appears to be almost universally used (I would think that the influence of the Catholic church, followed by the increase and power of the British Empire probably had a lot to do with that).

The abbreviation B.C. stands for before Christ; and A.D. means anno Domini, which means in the year of the Lord. Apparently those abbreviations/designations can be attributed to Dionysus.

At the time that the book of Luke opens, the people of Israel are back in the land, but they are no longer an autonomous nation. At the time that the birth of Jesus, Rome is the sovereign power, and Herod the Great, an Idumaean (Idumea is south of Judaea), is the governor/administrator/local ruler over Judæa. The people of Israel are quite upset that they no longer have sovereignty over themselves and the land (even though that had been the case for hundreds of years), and they often expressed their opposition to Herod and to Rome. Quite often, the Jews of that era were unreasonable in their opposition; and Rome and Herod could be unforgiving in their response to either.

Throughout the history of man, Scripture was being recorded. I believe that the book of Genesis was passed along orally—and with perfect accuracy—up to the time of Joseph or Moses. The people of Israel living in Egypt knew the book of Genesis and possibly the book of Job. However, their depth of knowledge is hard to ascertain. In any case, when someone in Exodus mentions the name of Abraham (or someone else whose history is found in Genesis), no one raises their hands and asks, “Now, this Abraham character, who is he again?” Now, in case you think, “Well, everyone knows their ancestors;” tell me again how many of your ancestors do you know from 400 years ago?

When Moses came on the scene, there were writing materials common and in use, and God required Moses to record their interactions and His words (as we read several times in the 4 books of Moses). From that point on, Scripture was recorded with whatever writing materials were available at the time; and the words of Scripture were thereafter preserved, generation after generation.

A class of people known as scribes came about. They were dedicated to the preservation of God’s words. One thing which occurred immediately is, manuscripts which were completed were not simply preserved, but copies made and those copies distributed. So, from the earliest time, the text for these manuscripts became fixed. That is, someone could not come along, 300 years later and decide, “I really don’t like Psalm 2, so I am going to make some changes in it so that it better reflects my philosophy.” The problem is, there are dozens—and perhaps hundreds—of manuscripts out there of Psalm 2, so even if someone believed that they needed to change to text in some way, there were too many witnesses available to the original text so that no one could make wholesale changes to


\(^{21}\) From Biblical Archeology.org; Monte Shanks, Ph.D. on WordPress; and NC Register.com; both accessed January 18, 2019. However, quite a number of other web pages were accessed which presented the same essential information.
existing manuscripts. The manuscripts were respected that much, as to keep multiple copies throughout the Jewish world.

There were other kinds of checks on the text of existing Scripture which we may discuss in the future.

We begin with Luke 1:1. I will be using the ESV; capitalized (which is simply the ESV where I have capitalized the pronominal references to God). Sometimes I will insert explanatory information into these verses, placed in brackets.

Luke wrote long complex sentences which often continued for many verses (many translators present vv. 1–4 as a single sentence). He is a man with long, complex thoughts.

Luke 1:1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile [= to arrange in order] a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us,...

In the first verse, we find that Luke is an intellectual with a writing style that is the polar opposite of John’s (whose Greek is deceptively simple). For instance, in the Book of John it takes 3 verses until you come upon a 3-syllable word. The first word in Luke 1:1 is a 4 syllable word, and in this first verse, there are 2 5-syllable words and 1 7-syllable word. So we know that we are dealing with an accomplished intellect here.

Whereas, the first 4 verses of Luke make up a single sentence; each verse in John is a single sentence.

The second verb in this verse is the aorist middle (deponent) infinitive of anatassomai (ἀνατασσομαί) [pronounced an-at-AS-som-ahee], which means, to put together, to arrange [in order], to compose. Strong’s #392. The aorist tense can refer to a point in time or to several points of time put together. The infinitive is often used to refer to purpose. A deponent middle voice is middle in form but it might be active in meaning. Luke took information from a variety of sources and attempted to weave all of that into a coherent, cohesive narrative which is arranged in order. He did this over a period of time in successive intervals.

Twice in this passage, Luke will make a reference to order; and I believe that he is referring to chronological order. Luke is a Greek, and I believe that the Greek culture emphasizes order and chronology more than the Hebrew culture did (the other writers of the New Testament are all Hebrew men). I am not saying that the Hebrew writers of Scripture ignored chronology, but there are many sections in the first third of Exodus where the organization is not always chronological. In fact, I can think of two instances off the top of my head where Moses goes back and writes more about an incident already recorded, providing additional information on that incident along with a different perspective.22

22 His first meeting with Pharaoh appears to be written about in two separate chapters; and his final meeting with Pharaoh also appears to have been written about in two separate chapters.
In this first verse, Luke says that many have already attempted to record an historic narrative. It is my thought that Luke had copies of Matthew and Mark, and that he drew upon those historical narratives when compiling his own. However, he says that many have attempted to write such a biography already. So, my guess is, he has some additional written material from others—perhaps incomplete or poorly written. No one could really put together a good narrative on his own unless he was a disciple with Jesus from the beginning; so, this would seem to limit the number of eyewitness biographers to 11 men. Jesus had other followers besides the 12 disciples, but we do not know how many of those were with Jesus for most of His public ministry. The term disciple means student, follower.

But, instead of being a follower of the Lord, Luke probably never met Him. Nevertheless, Luke was motivated to write a biography of Jesus. Now, Luke does not present himself as an eyewitness to these events (not in his gospel, anyways). Being a Greek, he may have knowledge of our Lord’s ministry, but it is likely that he never actually saw Jesus Christ. Luke probably believed in Him after His death, resurrection and ascension.

Luke only mentions himself a few times in the book of Acts, and does not make himself the focal point of any of the recorded history.

Luke, because of his relationship with Paul and with the early disciples of Jesus, was able to pick the brains of those who were eyewitnesses or men who knew eyewitnesses of the life of Christ.

Luke 1:1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile [= to arrange in order] a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us,...

I believe by these words that Luke is acknowledging that a number of people have put together narratives already—complete and partial—of the life of Christ. We have access to 4 such narratives, written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Luke had the biographies written by Matthew and Mark; but John wrote his gospel many years later—possibly after A.D. 90. It is my guess, based upon these introductory words that Luke had other manuscripts as well.

What people observed at the feet of our LORD was no doubt amazing; and some must have realized just how incredible His short ministry was. As a result, I think that there may have been several other biographies, or partial biographies, that were begun, but never completed.

The word many implies that Luke has access to more written material than Matthew and Mark’s gospels. What these many people have done is the aorist active indicative of epicheireō (ἐπιχειρέω) [pronounced ehp-ee-khi-REH-oh], which means, to put the hand to; to take in hand, undertake, attempt; to go about. Strong’s #2021. The aorist tense can refer to a point in time or to several points in time. Someone reflects upon their interaction with Jesus, or something that they saw Him do, and they write about it—they know that it is important and that nothing like this has ever happened before. However, they just are
not writers; they do not do research. They write 12 pages over a week’s time, and then are
never able to pick it up again.

Then one day, this Gentile Luke, who is traveling with Paul, is interviewing people who
knew Jesus. So, these unfinished accounts written during this period of time, are also
handed to him. This is most likely the way that we should understand many have attempted to compose a narrative of...

The concept of research in order to compile a historical narrative of anything was not a
brand new concept. Titus Flavius Josephus (A.D. 37–100) was an historian of this same
era, and the history which he wrote was also researched and compiled (however, he
copied a great deal of the Jewish history right out of the Old Testament Bible).

Is Luke the first person to write an historical narrative by gathering information from
eyewitnesses? I doubt it; but the best history is written by an historian who makes every
effort to secure the testimony of those who were there. This is what Luke did.


We are just completing Luke 1:1; there are a few more things to be said about this verse:

Luke 1:1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile [= to arrange in order] a narrative
of the things that have been accomplished among us,...

We are told that many have undertaken to arrange in order a narrative of the life of Jesus
(interestingly enough, that Luke does not use the Lord’s name until v. 31). In fact, the first
4 verses are the preface of Luke’s book.

Luke refers to us, which would be the people with whom he is associated at the time of this
writing. I would suggest that this is Luke and Paul but also people who actually were
closely associated with Jesus (I would include in this group both Mary, the mother of Jesus,
and Mary Magdalene).

The final verb in v. 1 is plêrophoreô (πληροφορέω) [pronounced play-rof-or-EH-oh], which
means 1) to bear or bring full, to make full; 1a) to cause a thing to be shown to the full;
1a1) to fulfil the ministry in every part; 1b) to carry through to the end, accomplish;
1b1) things that have been accomplished; 1c) to fill one with any thought, conviction, or
inclination; 1c1) to make one certain, to persuade, convince one; 1c2) to be persuaded,
persuaded, fully convinced or assured; 1c3) to render inclined or bent on. Strong’s #4135.

This verb is a perfect passive participle. Unlike the Hebrew, where there are essentially
two verb tenses (perfect and imperfect), the Greek has more than a half dozen tenses.
The perfect tense in the Greek is something which has occurred in the past, but with
results which continue on forever (this is not the same as the perfect tense in Hebrew).
The passive voice means that God worked our His divine good from within His people.
We have three primary meanings for this verb which are applicable here: *to have been accomplished, to have been fulfilled* and *to have been fully persuaded*. It appears to be just about impossible to find an English word which conveys all that is being said here. Luke is recording the things which were *accomplished* by God amongst his group (the other apostles); but these are things wherein Jesus Christ *fulfilled* the Law and the prophecies about Him (which was observed by many eyewitnesses); and these are things of which Luke and his associates *have been fully convinced, fully persuaded*. That is, he and his associates are certain that these events took place just as described. They have no doubts about that.

So that you are fully convinced of this understanding of the verb, let me give you 3 translations of this verse, bolding the translation of this particular verb:

**Luke 1:1 (Concordant Literal Version):** Since, in fact, even many take in hand to compose a narrative concerning the matters of which we are fully assured among ourselves,...

Luke and the other disciples (= students) and Apostles (= ultimate leaders in the first century) were certain of all the events which took place; and the accuracy of the historical narrative and the teaching of Jesus are both found in this book.

**Luke 1:1 (A Voice in the Wilderness)** Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us,...

Jesus was more than a teacher. The Old Testament was filled with things predicted about the Messiah to come, and He fulfilled these Old Testament prophecies (most, but not all of them; the Lord fulfilled 1st Advent prophecies but not 2nd Advent prophecies).

**Luke 1:1 (English Majority Text Version)** Since many have attempted to arrange a narrative about the matters which have taken place among us,...

The information recorded in the book of Luke were things which actually took place, and Luke has spoken to many eyewitnesses who have assured him of the accuracy of this biography. Luke is assuring his reader that all of this really happened.

For all we know, Luke may have used this verb purposely, as it laid out 3 things which he wanted to say; and he only needed one verb to say these 3 things. If this is the case, we know that we are dealing with a wonderful intellect here.

So Luke is endeavoring here to compose in chronological order an historical narrative. Of the 4 gospels, his is the book to look to if you want to know what happened when (at least for the first and final thirds of the book). In the other 3 gospels, although the general order is there (our Lord’s life, public ministry, death, burial, resurrection and ascension); when it comes to His public ministry, we cannot assume the events of, say, John 4 immediately

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23 Jesus’ 1st Advent is His life on earth as Luke will describe. His 2nd Advent is when He will return in the future (described in Rev. 4–22).
follows John 3, and immediately precedes John 5 (nor do any of the other gospels make this claim).

On the other hand, there are clear deviations from a precise chronology in Luke’s gospel (gospel means good news, by the way). The account of John the baptizer in Luke 2 is not entirely in chronological order with regards to Luke 3. We end this narrative about John; Luke looks ahead to what happens to John in the future (beyond the time of Luke 3), before we begin following Jesus. So, the narrative about John the baptizer is in order, chronologically; but only with regards to itself. Luke, when writing, simply wanted to take the events in John’s life out to a certain point (that point being, when John was arrested).

Also, the middle of the book of Luke emphasizes teaching far more than it emphasizes a series of chronological events. Placing the Lord’s teaching into some sort of chronological order would be quite difficult, as He appears to have taught the same concepts on different occasions (compare Matthew’s sermon on the mount with Luke’s sermon on the plain).

Bearing these things in mind, the book of Luke breaks down into three parts: the first third of Luke will begin in the days of Herod before the birth of Christ, and follow a series of chronological events, from before the Lord’s birth into His public ministry; the middle third will be the Lord’s teachings, almost separated from time; and the final third of Luke’s book will resume a chronological approach to the end of the Lord’s public ministry. The Lord’s teachings in the first and third portions of Luke seem to be more tied to specific events.

So far, we have covered the first verse of Luke:

Luke 1:1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile [= to arrange in order] a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us,...

Others in the past have attempted to develop narratives of what has taken place in the lives of Luke and the people with whom he is associated. These accomplishments are all related to the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the subject of this book (one might argue that Jesus is the subject of every book of the Bible).

Luke 1:2 ...just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers [= servants, subordinates, attendants] of the word have delivered them to us,

There were eyewitnesses to these events, which would have included the Apostles, but also other disciples who followed the Lord (perhaps not full time); and many who were positive towards His ministry. No doubt, there were those who gravitated towards the Lord at various times; and, perhaps when He was ministering in their region.

There were others who are called ministers or servants of the Word here. They began as disciples and they became servants of the Word, who spoke of these things from the very beginning. Unlike every other religious figure in history, Jesus had a very short public ministry and He never wrote a religious treatise, a religious philosophy, or an
autobiography. It is the testimony of the Lord’s followers which we study, which testimony includes the words of Jesus.

As a result of his association with Paul, Luke had found himself in touch with many firsthand and secondhand witnesses (a secondhand witness knows and speaks to someone who saw the Lord’s ministry with their own eyes).

There were those who became servants of the Word, indicating that they dedicated themselves to the teaching of the LORD’s words. At that period of time, there would have been thousands of people acquainted with Jesus, either directly or through their own associations.

Throughout the Roman empire, I would guess that a considerable number of people either knew or had interacted with an eyewitness to a portion of the public ministry of Jesus; or, at the very least, had an associate who knew eyewitnesses to the LORD’s ministry. The testimony of these eyewitnesses appears to be quite consistent.

Now, by the time the Luke writes his gospel, Jesus’ earthly ministry is long over with. Most estimate that Luke wrote his gospel after the late 60’s, and Jesus would have been executed around A.D. 33. So, at minimum, 2 or 3 decades had passed since the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. A great deal takes place during those decades (some of which, Luke will record in the book of Acts).

We do not really know when exactly Luke decided upon this undertaking. Luke is specifically named thrice in the Bible, each time by Paul (Col. 4:14  2Tim. 4:11 Philemon 24), which are letters written around A.D. 60. Interestingly enough, he does not speak of himself in the book of Acts, but that does not mean that he was not in attendance to the events recorded. If Paul speaks of Luke in 60 A.D., then I would guess that their association had to go back at least a decade or so. The book of Acts takes us from 33–62 A.D. Luke uses the word we in Acts 16:10, (see also vv. 11–13, 16) which places him in the time frame which I had suggested earlier (that is, with Paul circa 50 A.D.).

Given that time frame, most or all of the disciples would still be alive while Luke and Paul are traveling about. Jesus’s disciples had spread out into the world and no doubt, some were in far off places. But, during Luke’s time, he no doubt came into contact with many who sat under the LORD’s ministry and who personally viewed His life.

Skeptics have accused the gospels of being fantasies, being made up, or exaggerated. There are at least 5 fundamental problems with this: (1) People do not become legends after a few decades, where a false biography outshines the true events. This generally requires several centuries. (2) The biographers of Jesus not only saw or knew someone who saw the events of the life of Jesus; but the gospels are in general agreement on most everything (there are a few times when their accounts must be reconciled). (3) There are 4 different biographies of Jesus, written at different time, under different circumstances and in different places. Each of these biographies has its own flavor. Nevertheless, these biographies are in agreement about Who Jesus is and what He did. (4) The disciples who
wrote these biographies of Jesus did not receive wealth or fame or a better life for writing
them; the disciples were persecuted and eventually, all of them were killed for their faith
(except for John the Apostle, who was banished). (5) The 1st century was a time when
many books and letters were written. There are historians who are alive during this era.
However, what we do not have are books written at this time entitled Contra Luke (or,
Contra Matthew). That is, no one wrote a book which provided a contrary view to the 4
biographies of Jesus. Such a book could easily be written by an eyewitness to the ministry
of Jesus Christ, and the author could write, “I attended many of Jesus’ sermons, but I
never saw Him do any miracles of healings. That is a clear exaggeration.” But no one
wrote any books or pamphlets with this message (a message which would have received
full-throated support from Rome, which tried for a long time to tamp down Christianity).

After having all of these contacts in his life, Luke must have decided, at some point, I
should write this down. We have no idea how much time passed from the idea of writing
a history to the completion of his gospel (and later, the book of Acts).

Luke 1:2 ...just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers [= servants, subordinates, attendants] of the word have delivered them to us,

The end of v. 2 is somewhat confusing—who or what is being delivered to Luke and his
associates? Let’s look at a different translation:

Luke 1:1–2 Your Excellency Theophilus: Since so many people have undertaken the task
of compiling a narrative of events that have happened among us, [that is, people] who were
ministers of the word and original eyewitnesses [of these events], and who passed them
on to us;... (AUV)

Luke 1:1–2 Since many have undertaken to set in order a narrative concerning those
matters which have been fulfilled among us, even as those who from the beginning were
eyewitnesses and servants of the word delivered them to us,... (WEB)

What was delivered to Luke and others were these narratives which others had written
down. This suggests how Luke became involved in writing his gospel. He is traveling
about with Paul, and they are interacting with a variety of believers; and, from time to time
they meet people who actually heard the Lord teach, and they wrote some things down.
But, they were not sure what to do with these writings, so, when Paul and Luke and others
came to their city, they would share these things with them. At some point in time, Paul
and Luke had become such a repository of information, that Luke decided that he needed
to organize this material and to write it all down in an organized fashion. No doubt, both
Luke and Paul have heard a variety of stories about the Lord; and saw writings about Him.
At some point, Luke thought, “I really ought to organize this information.”

Luke reveals that he uses both primary and secondary sources in order to compile his
gospel. A primary source is a person who was there and saw the events take place. A
secondary source did not see the events, but he spoke to someone who did. Generally
speaking, you will have a more accurate historical narrative if you talk to someone who saw
the events take place; as opposed to interviewing someone who talked to someone, who talked to someone else, who saw these things occur. An eyewitness is someone who saw the actual events take place. A minister (servant, subordinate, attendant) of the Word is someone who is involved in teaching the truth of God. Such a one may have witnessed the events and maybe he did not. However, he is closely associated with those who saw the events unfold before their own eyes. These two sets of people transmitted this information to Luke or to those with whom he was closely associated. Therefore, this even allows for tertiary sources to have contributed to Luke’s gospel.

Bear in mind, there are two factors at work when writing Scripture. There is the human side, where Luke, using his vocabulary, his experiences, his thoughts, his memories, his literary style, records his gospel. However, Luke is moved along by the Holy Spirit. The function of the Holy Spirit in the writings of Luke assures us that what Luke writes is accurate information, and his words, while being fully his, are inspired by God.

As a new believer, I must admit, I had a lot of difficulty trusting in the power of the Word of God. I continually wanted to prove to those who would listen to me that the Word of God was the Word of God. However, as I have aged spiritually, I have come to realize that, the Word of God is able to reach into the soul of a person and touch them far better than my clever arguments. Now, if someone needs some logical convincing, I can do that; but I rarely lead with that. The greater power is God’s Word.


This is what we have studied so far:

Luke 1:1–2 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word have delivered them to us,...

Many people have taken it upon themselves to record a history of the early church, which has its foundation is the Lord Jesus Christ. Apparently, these accounts were actually brought to Paul and Luke and, apparently at some point, Luke assumed responsibility for these writings.

You will note that I have made one slight change in the ESV—can you see it and can you see how it changes your understanding of this passage? The little change that I made was, I capitalized the word Word.

Keeping that in mind, let me change it again:

Luke 1:1–2 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of Jesus the Christ [= the Word = Messiah] have delivered them [their writings, their accounts, their recollections] to us,...
What were people eyewitnesses of? They were eyewitnesses to the Living Word of God; they were eyewitnesses to the public ministry of Jesus the Messiah. Jesus is the Living Word of God (John 1:1–3, 14).

“He came into my city. He healed a man there that I know had been lame for all of his life. Let me describe this incident to you...” And such a written account was given to Luke as he traveled about with the Apostle Paul. Luke was not actually a witness to any of these events which he describes in his gospel; but he has talked to perhaps dozens of people who were. There were believers who came up to him and handed him a recollection of what they experienced; or they came up to him and said, “I am so glad you guys are telling everyone about Jesus. Please let me tell you what I saw with my very own eyes.”

Luke 1:3a  

...it seemed good to me also,...

Hearing the stories of all the people that they met; reading their accounts; confirming what they knew about Jesus. It seemed good to Luke to compile an account or a narrative of these events. Such an act—the creation of the gospel of Luke—would be divine good.

At some point in Luke’s life, while he is on the road with Paul; he had just finished speaking with some disciples who saw Jesus perform some miracles; or he had read yet another account of an event in the Lord’s life or a transcription of a sermon the Lord had given, and it suddenly strikes Luke—I need to write all of this down in a cohesive coherent narrative; I need to compile a narration of the Lord’s life!

Now, stop for a moment, and switch gears in your thinking: what was happening politically during Luke’s time? Had an emperor declared another anti-Christian edict? Had some ruler grabbed up a number of Christians and killed them? We don’t know, but whatever the political scene was during the time of Luke is unimportant to us. We are presently studying the Gospel of Jesus Christ as written by Luke the physician. What are the names of the politicians during the time of Luke and what things did they propose? Most of us would admit that we just don’t know. We might be able to find out some information today through googling; but, you know what is far more important than that? Luke’s biography of Jesus the Christ. This is how you can compare divine good to human good. What we need to know in the time that we live is Luke’s gospel. What we don’t need to know at this time? Who were the prominent leaders in Jerusalem, in Judæa, in Rome. We don’t need to know what they thought, said or did. If and when we need to know that information, Luke will give it to us.

Hundreds of millions of people today know the book of Luke, the biography of Jesus written by Luke; and many of them have studied or read this book. How many people in the world today know about the politicians and what they did and said during Luke’s life? Maybe 10,000 or so have some extra-Biblical knowledge of some of these men. Do you see the difference between divine good (the writing of the book of Luke) and human good (the things accomplished by politicians during the life of Luke)? Divine power is far more awesome than human power.
It is so easy to get wrapped up in today’s political scene; and the current president is nothing if not interesting and a spectacle. But, what is more important than anything that he does or says? The Word of God; the study of the Word of God. What our current president does will help to preserve our freedom awhile longer; but either in the next election or the election after that, someone will come up through the ranks and reduce our freedoms. We can be guaranteed of that. What is more important than someone like that? The Word of God and the study of the Word of God.

Don’t misunderstand me. I am not saying that you should be apolitical or that you should not vote. We live in a country where we are citizens have been given a great deal of freedom; and with that comes responsibility. It is a good idea to be informed; it is a good idea to understand what the Bible teaches about the laws of divine establishment (those laws which apply to all mankind); it is a good idea to apply what you learn from the Bible to your life (which includes how your process current events, the media, and the words and deeds of politicians). So there is nothing wrong with being informed and voting; but this should not be your life. Your life should be the Word of God. Politics are temporal, and they may change in the near future in a way that we like or in a way that we don’t like. But what does not change? Jesus Christ. He is the same yesterday, today, or forever. (Heb. 13:8) It is far better to be intimately related to what is eternal rather than to that which is temporal.

Luke 1:3a-b ...it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past,...

Luke was quite interested in all of the events which had transpired. This is an important thing to understand when it comes to your spiritual gift. God did not give you a spiritual gift that you will hate. Luke is very interested in all that happened before he came onto the scene. Who Jesus was, what He said and what He did—these things are very interesting to Luke. In fact, he is so interested in these things that he wants to compile a biography of Jesus based upon his interaction with a dozen or so people. This is something that he wants to do.

Personally, I like getting up in the morning, turning on the computer, and focusing on whatever passage of Scripture is before me that day. That is what interests me; that is what animates me. You may not have the slightest interest in anything like that. Nevertheless, you still have a spiritual gift (or two); and it will be something that you enjoy doing and will feel fulfilled doing.

There is no suggestion that Luke himself ever personally witnessed Jesus Christ during His ministry or saw the risen Lord. However, all that had transpired fascinated Luke. We do not know Luke’s age or his previous associations. He was very likely alive during our Lord’s public ministry, but we do not know where Luke was, whether he knew about Jesus at this time, or any other pertinent association or lack thereof.

It sounds very much as if Luke—wherever he lived—was aware of Jesus and of Jesus traveling about and of His teaching. He was likely aware of the miracles and signs that
Jesus was said to have done. At some point, this became more than just an interest of Luke’s; it became his passion. So, Luke has this life that he led; and, at the same time, Jesus is teaching in Galilee and in Judæa. Luke hears about this, and it interests him. And, at some point after the public ministry of Jesus, Luke is also taken into the inner circle of Paul and others.

I have been listening to an old series taught by the previous pastor of Berachah Church (R.B. Thieme, Jr.), and he talked about a Sacramento Bible conference during a period of time when I lived in Sacramento. This would have taken place around 1968 or 1969, when I was in college (Bob was in peak teaching form in that era). It is fascinating to hear his report of this conference, and what all occurred; as this all took place several years before I was saved and before I found out about Bob’s ministry. I would have loved to have heard his conference, in retrospect; to piece together what was being taught at that time; and connect it to my life at that time, which was certainly going in a very different and decidedly wrong direction.

Luke may have possessed the same sort of curiosity, having been alive during our Lord’s ministry, but possibly having a much different attitude about Jesus Christ at the time of His ministry (or, perhaps, no attitude, for that matter). We do not know what Luke thought about Jesus during the time of His public ministry. So far, I have not seen any clues.

And as we speak of Luke’s thoughts of the Lord during His public ministry (if any), I would like you to think about the different aspects of the Lord’s ministry. He performed many miracles and healings; but how do you think these things were perceived when spoken by a guy, who knew a guy, who knew a guy who was there? Jesus performed bona fide, miraculous healings; but this does not mean that someone who heard about those healings second-hand or third-hand was convinced of anything. So Luke probably heard about such things happening; but that does not mean that he heard these things and suddenly believed in the Lord. For all we know, he may have scoffed when hearing about an itinerant preacher who also healed people.

In any case, at the time of writing his gospel, Luke is likely a mature believer in Jesus Christ and he has a driving interest in our Lord’s life and His ministry. With this new attitude and focus in his life, Luke would likely have a strong desire, at this point in time, to put together a careful account of all that took place in the life of Jesus. Similarly, I have a strong desire to carefully examine Luke’s account of what took place; and hopefully, you have a strong desire to understand it as well.

Luke 1:3c ...to write an accurate [and] consecutive [account] for you,...

What Luke would write would be both accurate and consecutive. The ESV treats these words as adjectives, but they are actually adverbs which describe the way that Luke would write this narrative.
The first adverb is ἀκριβῶς (ἀκριβῶς) [pronounced ak-ree-BOHÇ], which means, exactly, accurately, diligently. Strong’s #199. The second is καθεξῆς (καθεξῆς) [pronounced kath-ex-ACE], which means, one after another, successively, in order. Strong’s #2517.

So Luke’s intent is to write accurately and diligently; and also to write successive and in order. In short, Luke wants to write an accurate biography of Jesus; and he wants it to be in order—which we would interpret as being in chronological order. As discussed earlier, Luke sometimes will follow out a set of events chronologically; but then, in the next chapter, double back to some things which happened earlier. To give you a specific example, Luke will tell us about the ministry of John the baptizer (or John the Herald). We will follow his ministry from the beginning and Luke will continue followed his ministry up to the point where John is arrested. At that point, Luke will stop and then go back a few months or a year and pick up events in the life of Jesus which took place before John’s arrest.

By Luke’s own hand, as carried along by God the Holy Spirit (2Peter 1:21), this historical narrative would be accurate and generally chronological. Many translated the descriptive words found here as adjectives, but v. 3b is properly ...to write accurately and chronologically to you...

Luke 1:3d ...most excellent Theophilus,...

Luke directs this gospel (and the book of Acts), to someone called Theophilus, whose name is found only here and in Acts 1:1. However, Theos is God and philos is friend; so Luke is addressing his two historical accounts to one who is a friend of God. Although there was, no doubt, a person by the name Theophilus (the Greek name is actually Theophilos), Luke’s gospel is apparently meant for anyone who is a friend of God. We have this status positionally once we believe in Jesus Christ; and we have this status experientially when we grow and mature spiritually.

Because Luke addresses the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts to Theophilus, where means friend of God, let’s examine a few possibilities: (1) There is an actual person with this name with whom Luke had a close relationship. (2) There is an actual person who has adopted this name, with whom Luke as a close relationship. Or (3) perhaps this is a biography written for anyone who sees himself as a friend of God. I lean toward the first or second option, that there was a man with the actual name Theophilus, whether that name be given to him at birth or at his second birth. Perhaps he was given that name and perhaps he, having believed in Jesus, took it upon himself.

Does this leave an opening for this letter to be for all those who love God? No doubt, even though this is in the singular (Luke does not address this to friends of God). Bear in mind that, when someone is teaching to a group, it is often quite effective to teach to a particular person in that group or to refer to them directly in some way.

In fact, let me suggest this: Luke is writing to a particular person who has this name; but God the Holy Spirit wants Luke’s gospel to be available to anyone who is a friend of God.
It is Luke’s description of Theophilus that suggests that he is a real person. He calls Theophilus most excellent. This is actually a single adjective kratistos (κράτιστος) [pronounced KRAHT-ihs-toss], which means, most honorable; mightiest, strongest, noblest, most illustrious, best, most excellent; used in addressing men of prominent rank or office. Strong’s #2903. This seems hardly the right word to use when addressing a non-specific group of believers who might end up reading Luke’s account of the Lord’s life.

Lesson 018: Luke 1:1–4

So far, this is what we have studied:

Luke 1:1–3a Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past,...

Luke’s actual process here is fascinating to me. I sit down before a keyboard, and I can go back to what I wrote 2 months ago and revise it. Something can occur to me today, which affects what I wrote 6 months ago, and I can go back and insert a few paragraphs here or there; or correct an error of opinion or interpretation; or simply tweak something so that I express an idea more accurately. None of this is burdensome to me. I feel blessed that God has given me this time to study and examine His Word.

On the other hand, what Luke did, from a writer’s perspective, is nothing less than amazing. He has talked to a dozen or so people, many of them disciples of Jesus Christ. He may have before him copies of the manuscripts of Matthew and Mark. Maybe a few men have written him a letter or two—or maybe he has 5 or 10 recollections or unfinished manuscripts sitting before him. Yet, somehow, Luke is going to sit down, and deftly integrate all he knows and all of the written material which he may have access to, and write, in probably a single draft, this book we have begun to study. Because of the ministry of God the Holy Spirit, we know what he writes will be accurate in all details; and we know by his own hand that this historical narrative is going to be laid out, more or less, chronologically.

Luke 1:3b-c ...to write an accurate [and] consecutive [account] to you, most excellent Theophilus,...

Luke, at some point in his ministry, having followed the Lord’s ministry for a period of time, and having received the accounts of many others in his travels, decided that it was time to try to put this information down into a cohesive, accurate and (mostly) chronological narrative and to deliver that narrative to Theophilus, who is likely an actual person. Theophilus was probably a fellow gentile believer, and these two narratives written by Luke (Luke and Acts) clearly establish the plan of God as extending to the gentiles.
Given that his name meant friend of God, I suspect that he may have named himself that rather than been born with it. Also, given the meaning of that name, it is reasonable to assume that God the Holy Spirit meant this narrative for us as well.

Luke’s approach here is fascinating, as Luke appears to be writing this for the private viewing or private library of Theophilus. Did Luke realize that he was writing a biography which would stand for all time, or did he simply want a close friend to know what had happened between A.D. 30 and 60 (give or take)? 2000 years later, this first book of Luke would be called, The Greatest Story Ever Told.

Luke 1:1–3  Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and minsters of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus,...

The beginning of the book of Luke follows the early history of Jesus and His early ministry. Around Luke 11, Luke then begins to list a plethora of teachings and parables. Perhaps they were tied still to a set of chronological events; but Jesus’ teachings, in this second section of the book of Luke, overshadow the events taking place while Jesus is teaching. Those teachings really stand on their own. Then, at the very end of the book of Luke, the author picks back up with a chronological approach, following the final days of the Lord's public ministry. The first portion of Luke and the final portion are very likely presented in chronological order. In the middle of this, we might entitle this section and the Lord taught this.

When I put this information together myself, perhaps today, I painted the exterior of a house; perhaps on another day, I worked on my taxes; perhaps on another day, I went to the gym. All of that is irrelevant to the examination of Luke’s biography of Jesus.

Similarly, there is going to be a great deal of Jesus’ teaching recorded in the middle of this book, and the related events of His life at that time are, in many cases, irrelevant—that is, the teaching simply stands on its own. It is my opinion that, when Luke heard the Lord’s teaching, that he was far more drawn to Jesus than when he heard about the Lord’s miracles and healings (although, these are recorded as well).

Some of what Jesus taught had a clear and related context. We will study Luke 5, and there is an incident where Jesus forgives the sins of a paralyzed man. All of the events surrounding that incident are very important, and lend themselves to what Jesus chose to teach at the time. However, this is not always the case.

Like many good teachers, Jesus often allowed a circumstance or a series of events about which everyone was aware guide His teaching. Consequently, the Lord would then begin teaching something, related to that circumstance or to those events. Because Jesus taught the truth, He could move towards the direction of that truth using things, events and customs around Him to get there.
However, there are many principles which Jesus taught which did not require a specific set of events as a setup.

Throughout His public ministry, Jesus taught the Mosaic Law, properly interpreting and applying it. Often Jesus would use the incorrect teachings of the pharisees as a kicking off point (the pharisees taught the Mosaic Law in a very legalistic way, and they often applied Jewish traditions). Jesus certainly taught about Himself as the Messiah, the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies—although He was very careful in this regard. Sometimes when He taught about Himself, this was primarily to his chief disciples (to the 12 disciples). And, on rare occasions, Jesus taught some Church Age doctrines (this may be limited primarily to the Upper Room Discourse, which is only found in the book of John).

Luke has a purpose in writing Jesus’ biography, which biography he addresses to Theophilus.

Luke 1:4  *...that you may [fully] know with certainty the things you have been taught.*

To *know* here is the aorist active subjunctive of *epignôskô* (ἐπιγνῶσκον) [pronounced *ehp-ing-nôs-kôn*], which means *to become thoroughly acquainted with, to know thoroughly; to know accurately*. Strong’s #1921. The aorist tense here surprises me. I would have expected a future tense here, as we are speaking of a point in the future when Theophilus will fully know with certainly the things which he has been taught. Or, perhaps the present tense, which indicates continuous action. But, the aorist tense refers to a point of time. Luke is assuming, from what I can tell, that Theophilus will receive this historical narrative and sit down and read it at successive points of time (this is known as the constantive aorist). Each time Theophilus reads the words of Luke, he thoroughly understands that particular section.

The subjunctive mood is from whence we get the helping verb *may*. Theophilus’ understanding will be dependent upon his volition. If he sits down with the Gospel According to Luke and carefully reads it, then he will have these knowledge gaps filled in. I used to be a math teacher and the biggest problem which I found were gaps in a person’s knowledge of mathematics. Math is the sort of topic that one needs a thorough background in order to progress. When progressing logically through a mathematical concept or problem, if a child did not understand step #3, then that is where he remains stuck, even if I, as his teacher, am now explaining step #5. I might be doing a damn fine job of explaining step #5, but if that student is back on step #3, my brilliant explanation is completely lost on him.

Bible doctrine is very similar. You must have a foundation upon which to build in order to progress in the Christian life. There are a number of topics which require a thorough treatment. Jesus Christ is our foundation, and we need to understand how we are saved (faith), why salvation is necessary (in order to satisfy the character of God), and what took place on the cross (Jesus Christ paid the penalty for our sins by taking these sins upon Himself and taking the punishment for them). These are fundamental to a believer, and soteriology—the study of salvation—fills up volumes of theological literature.
You may remember how you thought as a brand new believer; and you began to hear this, then you heard that, and already, you had 20 questions that you needed to have answered right then and there. And, if you studied further in the next few months, you might then have 40 unanswered questions (with only a handful of the original 20 questions actually answered).

At this point in my life, decades after I began to develop a long list of questions, I could not, for the life of me, tell you what any of my original questions were. But, I clearly remember having a truckload of such questions.

Luke 1:4  ...that you may [fully] know with certainty the things you have been taught.

Luke’s purpose is so that Theophilus, friend of God, will fully and completely know with certainly the things which he has been taught. Luke’s biography of Jesus will be a standard by which Theophilus can test whatever else he has heard.

Theophilus has been guided and taught accurate doctrine pertaining the Jesus Christ and the Church Age in which he finds himself. No doubt that Theophilus knew some things about the Lord; but, no doubt, Theophilus has some blanks in his knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Theophilus had certainly learned that salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ and that, in order to have his fellowship restored with God, and to be filled with the Holy Spirit, he needed to name his sin (s) to God; and he knew the importance of Bible doctrine. However, when he have some questions about this or that portion of the Bible, we have a multitude of places where we can go to get our questions explained; but Theophilus did not have this. Jesus Christ lived, had a public ministry, died for our sins, was buried, and was raised again by God the Father and God the Holy Spirit; but Theophilus does not have a full history of His life and all the details pertaining thereto. Consequently, by this biography, Luke is going to fill in any blank spaces. This way, Theophilus would have a complete historical picture of the Lord.

Luke 1:4  ...that you may [fully] know with certainty the things you have been taught.

There is another important aspect of our foundation as growing believers: an understanding of the Bible—how we got it, why it is important, and why it is the Word of God. This is known theologically as Bibliology, another topic which fills volumes of literature. The more we know about the Bible, the greater is our confidence in God’s Word. The more that I study the Bible, the more I am amazed that people do not believe in the Bible or who do not believe that it is the Word of God.

For most believers, and for some unbelievers, apologetics is an important study. Why should we believe the Bible? Why is faith in Jesus Christ logical? How can God make sense? Although there are many books on this topic, Josh McDowell writes one of the best, Evidence that Demands a Verdict; a book so good that Josh has rewritten this same book a half-dozen times or more. I consider myself somewhat of an intellectual, and I do
not have this inherent need to feel as if I am a part of a group or a movement. Therefore, after salvation, I approached Christianity with some skepticism, even though I had believed in Jesus Christ. If I was to believe this or that, I still wanted to be convinced. At the same time, I was not overly hard on Christian theology, because I also kept my mind active by continually asking, \textit{okay, what makes more sense than this? What philosophy, science or religion can match Christianity?} So, along the way, I ran into some gaps and difficulties, but I could not point to another religion, philosophy or science which was superior or one that had more answers. In fact, the more I studied the Bible, including apologetics, the less the world had to offer me by way of an equivalent mode of thinking.

This historical narrative which Luke will lay down will allow Theophilus to fill in some of the blank spaces in his knowledge of Jesus Christ, and to have a full, complete knowledge, as well as confidence, in what he has been taught.

Here is what we have studied thus far:

\textbf{Luke 1:1–4} Your Excellency Theophilus: Since so many people have undertaken the task of compiling a narrative of events that have happened among us, \textit{[that is, people]} who were ministers of the word and original eyewitnesses \textit{[of these events]}, and who passed them on to us; \textit{[and since]} I have thoroughly investigated the entire series of events \textit{[myself]}, I felt it would be good for me also to write you an orderly account of them. Then you could know how reliable the information is that you have been told. (AUV)

This translation puts Theophilus right up in front, as would be common for a letter today; or for the preface or dedication of a book. Luke is aware of many people who have started to compile a narrative of the events of the Lord’s life—suggesting that he is speaking of more than Matthew and Mark. Some of these people are teachers of the Word; and some of them are actual eyewitnesses to the events that Luke will describe.

Many people have had momentous situations occurs in their lives, and, at one time, one might hear these words, “I ought to write a book.” But, quite frankly, most people are not suited to write books. They are good starters, but they never finish. They have some good ideas about a series of incidents here, and some other things that happen elsewhere, but they are unable to tie everything together into a cohesive whole. Some people are able to describe what happened, but when sitting down before a keyboard, nothing happens.

So Luke has taken these complete and incomplete written accounts, added them to the verbal testimony which others have given him, and he has personally investigated these matters—suggesting that, if anything seemed too farfetched, that Luke found other witnesses to confirm said story.

Luke has gone out of his way to combine all of these narratives into a single book, with the intent that it be accurate. Luke wants his friend Theophilus to be able to rely upon this information as being a true and accurate narrative of real events.
There is one more thing which I have left out, which is pertinent to Luke recording these events and providing a record of this to Theophilus: the revealing of divine information in such a way as to move those of the church away from the Jewish Age (and the distortions of the religious class) and towards the Church Age. The term for this is progressive revelation. The books of Luke and Acts will acts as transitional books, where one begins in the Age of Israel, but, eventually finds himself in the midst of the Church Age. This takes place without Luke stopping to specifically define dispensational differences between the two ages.

God does not reveal Himself completely and fully all at once. In fact, some of His attributes and some of His thinking are developed over hundreds, if not, thousands of years. One of the most amazing things about Scripture is, there was not a complete systematic theology which could be written in A.D. 200 or 300. Once the text of the New Testament had become certain, a long time passed before every doctrine of Scripture was worked out.

This, in fact, is a marvelous conundrum for skeptics. Many skeptics believe that the church first had a set of doctrines to which they ascribed; and then they chose the books to canonize which were in line with their doctrines. But the canon of Scripture came first; and then came the development of systematic theologies.

Interestingly enough, the Catholic Church—which was, at the first, a marvelous institution—began to go awry, doctrinally speaking. Did they change the canon of Scripture to suit their new doctrines? No, not at all. The Catholic church began to make the Scriptures less and less assessable to the general public. As time progressed and the common language changed, the Scriptures were not brought up to date by the Catholic Church. In fact, the Catholic Church for all intents and purposes hid the Scriptures from their people. For centuries, the Catholic church kept using the Latin Scriptures, which only the clergy understood; the people did not.

What truly began the reformation is, more and more people got their hands on a Bible which was in their language (I have oversimplified this). Then they could read it for themselves and see where the Catholic Church had gone astray.

What’s happening today in the Protestant churches? They are also straying from the truth of God, just as the Catholic Church did. In how many churches can you hear entire books taught from the pulpit? In how many churches, does the pastor propose to teach Systematic Theology over a period of 5 years? As we move further and further from the Word of God (despite having many dozens of excellent translations to use), our churches move further and further from the Word.

When man moved from the Age of the Gentiles to the Age of the Jews, this occurred virtually overnight. Nation Israel left Egypt, went into the desert, received the Law of God, and emerged from that desert to walk into the land of Canaan and to take it. In one or two generations, Israel went from being a nation of slaves to an independent nation with a very systematic approach to worship—and they had the complete Law of Moses as their nation’s constitution.
During the time that Luke is writing, the very same thing is occurring. Over a period of less than 40 years, worship of the True God went from occurring quite naturally in Israel to occurring completely apart from nation Israel (even though many of the believers early on were Jews). What grew out of Paul’s teachings (and the teachings of the other Apostles) was a whole new system of worship which was no longer centered in the Temple or upon meaningful symbolic rituals. Logically, there had to be a new system of worship because, before Jesus, the Scriptures all looked forward to Him; and after Jesus, the Scriptures and related worship looked back to Him.

The book of Luke puts us smack dab in the middle of these two great eras—the Age of Israel and the Church Age.

Lesson 019: Luke 1:5a  Herod the Great and his descendants

At this point, Luke ends his introduction, and launches us into the actual historical narrative. In modern literature, these first 4 verses would have been either the preface or the introduction to the book of Luke.

Luke 1:5a  In the days of Herod, king of Judea,...

Before 586 B.C., Judah (the southern kingdom) was independently ruled by Jewish kings, descendants of David. But when Judah was invaded by Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon, that ended the independence of Israel. The Jewish people were eventually returned to the land—70 years later—but they were no longer an autonomous nation.

At least twice in the Lord’s biography, Luke will set the secular historical stage for the events of His life.

There are about 6 different Herod’s in history (all related) and as many as 5 of them are found in the Bible. The Herod of v. 5 is the big dog, so to speak, known as Herod the Great. The other Herod’s are his sons and grandsons.

His life is a fascinating study. He rules over the Jews as a part of the Roman empire, although he is from Edom where his family was forcibly converted to Judaism. This makes Herod a Jew by religion, but he is not accepted as truly Jewish by the Hebrew people.

Edom, if you will recall, is at the southern tip of the Dead Sea, a region founded by Esau, Jacob’s twin brother (recall that Jacob was a Jew and Esau was not; and that Esau was often a nicer person than Jacob).

Herod ruled over Palestine between 37–4 B.C., and actually did what he could to try to make things work with the Jews in Judah. He apparently built the Temple of Judea with his own money, where the Jews worshiped, yet they do not appear to give Herod any credit for this.
I have studied a variety of opinions on the Temple, and I have heard, over and over again, that the Temple was built twice: first by Solomon and then by Zerubbabel. I cannot tell you in how many places I have read about these two Temples. But Herod either built or fixed up the 2nd Temple; but it seems like Jewish historians refuse to give him any credit for this.

At the end of his life, Herod apparently suffered from mental problems (it is suggested that his body was riddled with venereal diseases), and the Herod whom most Christians view as a great villain (which he was at the end of his life) is not necessarily representative of Herod’s entire life. However, as you may understand, there are things that you can do in your life—sometimes just one volitional choice—and you will be forever defined by that choice. I am not an apologist for Herod the Great; but it is important that you realize that there was more to him what we find in the Word of God.

For instance, we have had presidents in the past who are known for *Tear Down this wall*; one who admitted having lust in his heart, one who said, “Read my lips, no new taxes;” one who said, “The American people have a right to know if their president is a crook, and I am not a crook;” and one who said, “I did not have sex with that woman.” For people who lived through those years, you know exactly who these presidents are (you may differ with me on what defined those men as president); but my point is, it can be a single quote, and that quote might be how almost everyone remembers the man. For some of you, those quotes virtually define the way that you remember that particular president—despite the fact that each of those presidents had a myriad of successes and failures, good and bad choices, which they made while in the oval office. The more you know about Richard Nixon, the more you might be angry about him being remembered for saying, “I am not a crook!” He was a very accomplished president, as were the others suggested (again, many of them had failures and successes throughout their lives). It should be obvious that the lives and presidency of these men can be dramatically colored by the quotes or incidents which I have suggested; whereas, the truth about their lives is far more complex.

The same is true of Herod. On the one hand, he will desire to kill Jesus as an infant, believing that this infant will take from Herod his kingdom. As a result of this paranoia, Herod will kill hundreds if not thousands of infants, hoping to protect his kingdom (by that time, he is protecting his kingdom for his sons). What man, outside of a monster, could do such a thing?

However, earlier in his reign, Herod built/rebuilt the Temple for his people the Jews. He did not have to do that. He did not have to commit men and materials and time to such a massive project like that. He could have taken these same resources and made his own palace bigger and better. He could have told the Jewish people, “If you want to improve your Temple, then do it yourselves!” In fact, their opinion of him would like have not been any different.

It might be instructive to know a little about the history of Judæa at this time and how Herod the Great became ruler. Herod was born an Idumæan, which was an Arab group of people who were descendants of Esau, living in Edom, south of Judæa. However, not too long before Herod was born, the Hasmonæans, the nationalist party of the Jews, had
conquered Idumæa and they made them all Jews—the males were circumcised, they were to follow Jewish customs and laws. So, Herod was brought up by religion a Jew. However, he was also the son of one of the smartest and wealthiest Idumæans, Antipater II. But, genetically speaking, Herod was descended from the wrong brother. Since he was descended from Esau, racially Herod was an Arab; had he been descended from Esau’s twin brother Jacob, then Herod would have been Jewish by religion and by blood. Consequently, Herod would grow up conflicted; just as the Jews would have been conflicted about this group of Arabs.

Around 48 B.C., Julius Cæsar finds himself in Egypt, with too small an army, in somewhat of a jam. Herod, at 26 years old, raises an army and gets Cæsar and his small army safely out of Egypt, getting him out of this jam. Initially, it seemed like a smart move to be the friend of Julius Cæsar.

There continued to be civil unrest in the Rome (Cæsar was assassinated in 44 B.C.); while there was also civil unrest in Palestine. It appears that the family of Herod was in opposition to the Hasmonæans. Since Herod backing Cæsar did not work out well (given that Cæsar was assassinated), Herod financially backed Cassius, who allied himself with Brutus, and they fought against Octavius the grand nephew of Julius Cæsar (he adopted Octavius as his son), and Mark Anthony. Again, Herod had backed the wrong man. Roman leadership would fall to Octavius and Mark Anthony and not to Cassius or Brutus.

Despite backing the wrong man, Herod went boldly to Rome and spoke directly to Octavius, and said that he was a friend of Cassius and also a friend to the Roman empire; and he hoped to continue this friendship. Mark Anthony actually knew Herod as a youth and liked him. So Herod returned to Palestine, having solidified a friendship with Octavius and renewed his friendship with Mark Anthony. As a result, Herod again was a friend of the Roman empire (which was very important to his continued rulership of Palestine).

When Herod’s returned to Palestine, another revolt broke out with the Hasmonæans, and Herod tried to fix this by marrying the last Hasmonæan woman, Mariamne. Herod is said to have made two great mistakes at this time: (1) he married Mariamne and (2) he fell in love with her. She apparently did not feel the same way, and she betrayed him.

You have no doubt heard of Mark Anthony and Cleopatra, but Herod was in that mix as well. Anthony gave some of Herod’s land to Cleopatra, Herod balked, and he got some of his land back. Furthermore, when Cleopatra tried to seduce Herod, he turned her down and she apparently hated him for it.

In case you do any independent reading on Herod, there is another Cleopatra in his life; different from the Queen of Egypt previously mentioned.

Anyway, soon after Cleopatra decided that she hated Herod, Octavius and Mark Anthony were at war with each other, and again, Herod backed the wrong horse. He helped Anthony raise money for his defense, but Octavius defeated Anthony and Cleopatra.
Again, Herod goes to Rome; he speaks directly to Octavius, and tells him exactly what he did. Octavius respected his honesty and his pledge of loyalty; and allowed Herod to continue as king over the Jews. In fact, Octavius is said to have two great friends in the world at this time: Agrippa, who handled all of the administration, and Herod.

Over and over again, Herod fought to maintain control over his kingdom in Palestine; and he managed to continue in this position, despite all of the unrest around him and despite backing the wrong man over and over again.

What made Herod quite valuable to Rome is, he established law and order throughout most of his land, despite the opposition of the Jews (they hated him because he was an Arab by race).

Not long before Jesus was born, Herod established peace and safety in the Galilean area, removing the bandits which plagued that area. As a result, Jesus was raised in an area where there was relative peace and safety—which apparently continued throughout His life—despite the great turmoil in the world. In the narratives of the gospels, Jesus moves about the land in relative safety, apart from the animosity of the Jewish religious class.

R. B. Thieme, Jr., based upon his extensive knowledge of ancient history, described some aspects of Herod's reign like this: *Herod never had a statue or a picture made and never had his face on coins, so there is no way of knowing what he looked like from the usual archaeological sources, simply for this reason: Herod knew that he would offend the Jews if an image was set up. He always catered to the Jews, to the nationalist party, and never did he allow his image to be on a coin or a statue to be put up, so our only descriptions come from people of the ancient world. He was tall, very handsome, athletic with a very strong body. He had great charm of address and he was one of the greatest conversationalists of the ancient world. He was a famous hunter and horseman and a championship wrestler. Being of Arab stock he had black hair and a golden skin, with brown eyes, a moulded nose and small ears. He was never worth less than $50,000,000, except when he went bankrupt twice. He went bankrupt once feeding the Jews in a time of economic decline. He spent his whole fortune feeding the Jews by buying grain in Egypt, and they repaid him very shortly thereafter by revolting against him. This all goes to show that the monster Herod that we know wasn't the monster in his early life.*

Most of us know the famous names of Julius Cæsar, Cassius, Brutus, Octavius, Mark Antony, and Cleopatra (especially if you have read Shakespear). Fewer people realize that Herod was right there in the midst of all of them, just as famous and probably far more consequential than some on that list. It is very likely that his refusal to put his visage on

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24 This came from the Matthew series that R. B. Thieme, Jr. taught, as did most of the material on Herod. From R. B. Thieme, Jr., Matthew, MP3 CD (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 1965), 438-005.
The actual history of these men is far more complex than the summaries provided below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Herods of Scripture</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Herod the Great was famous for his many building projects, including that of the Jewish Temple (it appears that he restored and greatly improved upon the second Temple, which had been originally built by Zerubbabel, who was the Achaemenid-appointed governor over Judæa). Herod was also famous for his attempt to kill his rival king, the Messiah of Jerusalem, by killing all of the male children born at the time that Jesus was born (Matt. 2).</td>
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<td>2. Herod II, also called Herod Philip I, was married to Herodias, who later divorced Herod II and married Herod Antipas, Herod II’s half brother. John the baptizer condemned that was wrong (Matt. 14:3–4).</td>
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<td>3) At one time, Herod II was considered to be the natural heir to Herod the Great. However, he lived as a private citizen in Rome with Herodias, and thus survived Herod the Great’s deathbed purges.</td>
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<td>3. One of Herod’s sons is Herod Antipas (or Antipater), who was also know as Herod the tetrarch (Matthew 14:1; Luke 3:1). Tetrarch means that he governed a fourth part of the kingdom.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1) He reigned over Galilee and Perea.</td>
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<td>2) He ruled over this area 4 B.C.–39 A.D., throughout nearly the entire human life of Jesus.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4) Because Jesus was from Galilee, during His trials, He was sent to Herod Antipas, when Pilate was trying to extricate himself from making a decision regarding Jesus. Luke 23:1–12</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Herod Archelaus (23 B.C.–18 A.D.) was ruler over Samaria, Judea, and Idumea (or, Edom) between 4 B.C. and 6 A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Mary and Joseph temporarily moved to Egypt to escape Herod the Great's attacks upon the newborn males in his realm. When Herod died, they returned from Egypt, but moved up to the Galilee area rather than to Judæa, having been warned in a dream about Herod Archelaus reigning in his father’s stead. Matt. 2:19–23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) He was given the title Ethnarch from Cæsar, which means that he was a non-king who ruled over an ethnic group (this would have limited his authority; apparently, he could not have people executed).</td>
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<tr>
<td>3) He was deposed from his reign in A.D. 6, as a result of the Jewish people petitioning Cæsar Augustus for his removal. There was a great deal of animosity between the Jews and Herod Archelaus, which went both ways.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The Herods of Scripture

4) There were 16 or 17 Roman administrators (governors) who followed Herod Archelaus until the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

5) Herod Archelaus, although not officially recognized as governor of Judæa, Samaria and Idumea, his 10 year reign was among the top 3 reigns with regards to length of time over a period of 135 years.

6) Pontius Pilate was the Roman prefect in Judæa between 26–36 A.D.

5. Philip the Tetrarch, also called Herod Philip II, was the son of Herod the Great and Cleopatra of Jerusalem. He ruled over the northeastern portion of his father's kingdom from 4 B.C. until he died in A.D. 34.

1) His kingdom included Iturea and Trachonitis; and possibly Gaulanitis and Paneas.

2) Philip is not mentioned in Scripture, as his kingdom is just east of Galilee.

3) On the other hand, his wife (and niece), Salome, is.

4) There seems to be some disagreement in this regard, and Wikipedia suggests that there may be some historic confusion here, as Philip would have been nearly 40 years older than Salome (I don't know that would really be a problem).

5) Salome had asked her father (Herod Antipas) for the head of John the baptizer. Matt. 14:1–11 (she is simply called the daughter of Herodias in this passage, as Philip was not her actual father).

6. Herod Agrippa I was the grandson of Herod the Great (Acts 12). It was he who persecuted the church in Jerusalem and had the apostle James, the brother of John and son of Zebedee, put to death by the sword. By the hand of Herod Agrippa I, James became the first apostle to be martyred. Two of Agrippa I's daughters were Bernice and Drusilla, mentioned in Acts 24 and Acts 25.

7. Agrippa's son, Herod Agrippa II, was instrumental in saving Paul from being tried and imprisoned in Jerusalem by the Jews who hated his testimony of Jesus as the Messiah. King Agrippa, out of consideration for Paul being a Roman citizen, allowed Paul to defend himself, thereby giving Paul the opportunity to preach the gospel to all who were assembled (Acts 25—26). Agrippa II was the last of the line of Herods. After him, the family fell out of favor with Rome.

When we come across these men later on in Scripture, I will provide the background for them. But this is quite fascinating, as this is a period of nearly 200 years where the descendants of Esau ruled over the descendants of Jacob.

Quotations taken from Got Questions?: accessed April 12, 2019.

Additional references:
Wikipedia; Wikipedia; Wikipedia; Reasonable Theology. Org; Bible Study.org;
All of these accessed April 12, 2019
Like any map, we have an imprecise knowledge of history; and boundaries of countries and regions were often in flux.

The area within the black lines would be that ruled over by Herod the Great between 37–4 B.C.

Herod’s sons ruled over the same area, which was divided up between them. However, their power was always subject to Roman Senate confirmation and Roman review. As you have read earlier, Herod Archelaus failed as a ruler over Judæa, but then, so did many others who followed him. The Hebrew people rejected the rule of an Idumæan and of anyone representing the Roman empire; and even of their own Messiah.

Lesson 020: Luke 1:5

Luke begins his narrative of the Lord’s life at the end of the reign of Herod the Great.

Luke 1:5a In the days of Herod, king of Judea,...

This helps us to put a time on these events. Herod the Great played a significant role during the time that Jesus was born. Also, Herod died in 4 B.C. (according to most sources; although some say later); so we know that these events of Luke 1–2 take place before 4 B.C.
Luke 1:5a-b  In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah.

The priesthood of Israel was very well-defined in the books of Exodus and Numbers and the animal sacrifices which they oversaw are described in the book of Leviticus. However, it is good to have some fundamental understanding of the Jewish priesthood.

The concept of what a priest is has been thoroughly distorted—particularly by one particular branch of Christianity—so we need to touch upon the idea of what a priest in the Jewish era was:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>The Old Testament Priesthood</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Jacob had 12 sons, and one of them was Levi. Levi became the <em>spiritual</em> branch of the Jews. The Levites did not own land, as they were only in the world, but not of the world.</td>
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<td>2. The Levites were involved with all the spiritual activities of the Jews.</td>
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<td>3. Moses and Aaron (his brother) were both Levites. Aaron became the first High Priest and only those in his genealogical line were considered priests. Therefore, the common name, the Levitical Priesthood is somewhat of a misnomer; it should really be called the Aaronic Priesthood. All priests were Levites but not all Levites were priests. However, since the priests are descendants of Levi, it is called the Levitical Priesthood, even in the Bible (Heb. 7:11).</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Priests were in charge of the spiritual services first at the Tabernacle (a semi-permanent tent) and later at the Temple—a permanent edifice marking Israel’s <em>permanent</em> control over the land of Palestine and, ideally speaking, indicating their submission to God in the land.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Their church service, so to speak, was quite a bit different than ours. Jews would bring their prize animals to the priests, and these animals would be slaughtered on the altar, blood spurting out in all directions. After a typical service, there would be blood everywhere—on the altar, all over the ground, all over the priest’s clothing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. One man would be High Priest, who would be over all the other priests. <em>For every high priest taken from men is appointed in service to God for the people, to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins</em> (Heb. 5:1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The meat of the sacrificed animals was eaten by the people and by the priests, as this symbolized faith in the sacrifice and in the Revealed God.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. This priesthood was perpetuated by birth. There were no celibate priests in the Old Testament. Priests married, had children, and their male children were priests. The idea of some sort of specialized priesthood as being a bunch of guys who wear funny clothes and don’t have sex is not anywhere close to a Biblical concept (except for, the High Priest did have a uniform).</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 9. Old Testament priests were unable to forgive sins. The blood of the animal sacrifices covered the sins of Old Testament saints, but did not provide them with absolute forgiveness. *If, then, perfection [a complete cleansing from sin] came through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the Law), what*
The Old Testament Priesthood

further need was there for another Priest [that is, Jesus] to arise in the order of Melchizedek, and not to be described as being in the order of Aaron? (Heb. 7:11). Now every priest stands day after day ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins (Heb. 10:11).

10. The primary function of a priest was to represent man before God. In this way, the priest was a type of Christ. The High Priest in particular was an Old Testament picture of Jesus Christ.
   a. The High Priest was the chief priest, and he went into the Holy of Holies once a year and sprinkled blood on the mercy seat, which was over the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark of the Covenant represented Jesus Christ, as did the High Priest. The blood sprinkled on the mercy seat was representative of Jesus’ spiritual death for our sins.
   b. For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; therefore it was necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. Now if He were on earth, He wouldn’t be a priest, since there are those offering the gifts prescribed by the law. These [the priesthood and the animal sacrifices] serve as a copy and shadow of the heavenly things [that is, they are types], as Moses was warned when he was about to complete the tabernacle, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern [= typos (type)] that was shown you on the mountain." (Heb. 8:3–5).
   c. We get our technical term type (typology) from the Greek word tupos (τύπος) [pronounced TOO-poss], which means, an archetype serving as a model, type, pattern, model (among other things).

11. The priest stood before God with the animal sacrifice of the sinner and asked for the blood of the animal to cover the sinner. Jesus Christ stands before God with His blood (i.e., His spiritual death) to cover our sins. Therefore He [Jesus Christ] had to be like His brothers in every way, so that He could become a merciful and faithful High Priest in service to God, to make propitiation [= the act of placating or appeasing God; the act of conciliating ourselves to God] for the sins of the people (Heb. 2:17). Therefore since we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens—Jesus the Son of God—let us hold fast to the confession [of our faith] (Heb. 4:14).

12. Believers today (in the Church Age) are called priests, as we are now able to represent ourselves before God, as our Intermediary, Jesus Christ, has paid for our sins in full. But you [believers in the Church Age, to whom Peter addressed his letter] are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light (1Peter 2:9; Ex. 19:5b–6a; emphasis mine).
   a. In this verse, Peter is drawing parallels between believers of the Church Age and believers of the Age of Israel. Peter calls Church Age believers a chosen race, a royal priesthood and a holy nation.
   b. He is teaching that, in this dispensation, all believers (including female believers) are priests; and we all represent ourselves directly to God.
because we are *in Christ* (one of the most important phrases found in the epistles (this phrase is found 93 times in the NT; and 89 times in the Pauline epistles).

c. Similarly, believers in the Church Age are a *chosen race* and a *holy nation*.

13. Therefore, all remaining *priestly functions* are done by believers in the Church Age; and not by people who have some special office of priesthood. You are a priest; and I am a priest. When I want to go to God, I go to Him directly, on all matters. The same is true for you.

14. There is no such thing as a specialized priesthood today or an intermediary priesthood (someone you go to who has a special *in* with God). No one has an *in* with God. Now, if you want to gather with like-minded believers and pray together for something, that is great. But don't think that you can depend upon someone else to get through to God when you can't. If you are in fellowship, then God is listening. If you are not in fellowship, don't ask someone else to pray for you; just get back into fellowship (1 John 1:9) and pray directly to God.

15. Today, in the Church Age, there is no such thing as priests, nuns or monks as legitimate positions in the modern church. Those *specialized offices* do not exist in the Church Age. They are found nowhere in the Bible and there is no similar office defined in Scripture. In fact, most of the time, those offices are quite unnatural, due to their celibacy vows. As a result, over the years, some of them have done some very bad stuff.

As an addendum, because the Aaronic priesthood was a matter of biological lineage, Jesus Christ is called, on several occasions, a *priest after the order of Melchizedek*. This is because Melchizedek was chosen by God to be a priest; and this was not a matter of birthright (those descended from Aaron have a birthright claim to the priesthood; Jesus was not descended from Aaron). Jesus, instead, was descended from Judah, the ruling tribe. Therefore, Jesus was not a priest after the pattern of Aaron but after the order of Melchizedek.

Jesus has entered there [into the Holy of Holies] on our behalf as a forerunner, because He has become a *high priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.* For this Melchizedek—King of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham and blessed him as he returned from defeating the kings, and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything; first, his name means "king of righteousness," then also, "king of Salem," meaning "king of peace"; without father, mother, or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God—remains a priest forever (Heb. 6:20–7:3; Psalm 110:4 Gen. 14:18b, 20b). See also Heb. 7:1–17

Now, quite obviously, Melchizedek did have a mother and father and a genealogy, but these things are not recorded in Holy Writ, making him a better *type* of Christ. The key to the Levitical priesthood was their genetic link to Aaron. Since Jesus lacked this link, He was considered a *Priest after the order of Melchizedek*.

The weakness of the Levitical Priesthood is, these priests were unable to truly forgive...
sins, as they were just as human as those for whom they offered up animal sacrifices. Jesus is both our High Priest and our sufficient sacrifice. So Jesus has also become the guarantee of a better covenant. Now many have become Levitical priests, since they are prevented by death from remaining in office. But because He remains forever, He holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is always able to save those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to intercede for them. For this is the kind of high priest we need: holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He doesn't need to offer sacrifices every day, as high priests do—first for their own sins, then for those of the people. He did this once for all when He offered Himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak, but the promise of the oath, which came after the law, appoints a Son, who has been perfected forever (Heb. 7:22–28).

In the New Testament, every believer is a priest and may represent himself directly to God. We do not go to a special priest, no matter where he is or what kinds of clothes he wears, no matter what your religious dogma teaches. Jesus has purchased us with His blood, giving us direct access to God. Jesus is now our true intermediary. When you want forgiveness for whatever sin or sins you have committed, you go directly and immediately to God, and you name those sins aloud or silently directly to God. God will forgive you of those sins and then He will cleanse you of all unrighteousness (1John 1:9). As a result, you will be fit for service again.

Luke 1:5a-b In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah.

There are two basic forms of the name Zechariah: the Hebrew form is Zechariah, and this is what we find in most Bibles. However, there is no h in the Greek, not in the middle or at the end of a word, as we it in the English (or, as is found in the Hebrew). Because there is no actual letter h in the Greek, the Hebrew name Zechariah is transliterated into the Greek with Zacharias. So, if you have a Bible translation based upon the Greek, where they do not try to synch up Old Testament and New Testament names, you will have the name Zacharias instead. They are the same name and they refer to the same person in this passage.

Interestingly enough, even though there are several Abijah’s in the Bible, but only one of them can be identified with Zacharias’s priestly line—he is mentioned but one time in 1Chron. 24:10. We only have two or three important lines in the priesthood which produce the high priest); the Abijah line does not appear to be among those lines (although, if memory serves, there are many priests with that particular name).

King David recognized 24 families of priests, one of them being the family of Abijah (1Chron. 24:6, 10). If this many families stretch back to the time of David, there were many who were descended from the priest line by the time of the Incarnation (Jesus Christ coming into this world). Zechariah was one such man.
As an aside, the Jews were overrun, thoroughly defeated, and taken out of the Land of Promise into captivity on two occasions: the northern kingdom in 721 B.C. and the southern kingdom in 586 B.C. The Babylonians removed most of the Jews from out of Palestine in 586 B.C., but, the Persians, who soon thereafter defeated the Babylonians, allowed the Jews to return to this land. Zechariah’s family did not return immediately. However, Zechariah was still able to know his own ancestry and track this back at least 1000 years (or, at the very least, his family recognized what division of the priesthood they were descended from).

These details may or may not be interesting to you, but they indicate the precision and detail of Luke’s historical narrative. They also suggest outstanding historical records were kept by the Jewish people, whether living in their land or not.

Luke 1:5 In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

Zechariah and Elizabeth, husband and wife, were both descended from Aaron. The text here indicates that the Jews kept very accurate birth records, even during the time that they were exiled (the family of Abijah did not immediately return from the Babylonian/Persian captivity—Ezra 2:36–39 Neh. 7:39–42 12:1).

So, there is no misunderstanding, Zechariah is a priest—he is a legitimate priest; and he has a wife. Both he and his wife would have been descended from Aaron. He could not have been a priest if he was not the result of conception between a male priest and that man’s wife. There was no such thing as a celibate priesthood in Israel. They would be celibate before marriage, but priests searched out their right woman, they married, and they had children, if God so blessed them.

There are two common spellings for Zechariah. Similarly, Elisabeth is the Greek transliteration of Elizabeth. I will use these pairs of names interchangeably.

Both Zacharias and Elisabeth were ultimately descended from Aaron, which was the priestly line. Zacharias is further identified as coming from a particular line of Aaron, the line of Abijah.

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Lesson 021: Luke 1:5–9 The Canon of Scripture Part One

In the previous lesson, we studied the Old Testament priesthood; and we found that there is no such thing as some exclusive, specialized priesthood in this age. Every person in the Church Age who believes in Jesus is a priest.

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25 Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon defeated the Hebrew people and they were removed from their land. The Persians later defeated Babylon and allowed the Hebrew people to return.
The early narrative in Luke begins to focus on Zechariah and Elizabeth—they are both Levites descended from Aaron. The preface has been completed and the historic stage set.

Luke 1:5 In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

Herod, king of Judæa, is known in history as Herod the Great. As we have studied, he is as important to the history of this region as Julius Cæsar, Mark Anthony and Cleopatra, each of whom had a peripheral relationship with the Jews in Palestine.

Our focus for much of this chapter is going to be upon two Aaronic Levites who are married: Zechariah (also, Zacharias); and Elizabeth (also, Elisabeth). They are both descended from Aaron (Aaron was descended from Levi, who was a son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham).

Luke 1:6a And they were both righteous before God,....

Righteousness is a state imputed to believers in both the Old and New Testaments, which comes by faith in Jehovah Elohim, the Revealed Member of the Godhead (Christ Jesus in our age). Recall Gen. 15:6: Abram believed the Yhwh, and He [God] credited it to him as righteousness. This is a legal declaration. Abram's faith in Jehovah Elohim was credited to him as righteousness. This does not mean that Zechariah and Elisabeth do not sin; but it means that they are declared righteous before God, and, therefore, they have eternal life. They are not righteous because they do the right sort of things every day, but because God imputed righteous to them because of their faith.

Luke 1:6b ...walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord.

Old Testament and New Testament spirituality are different. In all dispensations, we are saved by faith in the Revealed Member of the Trinity, Whom we know as Jesus Christ (this is how God reveals Himself to us). In the Old Testament, He was known as Yhwh. (a personal name which could be applied to any Member of the Godhead). Salvation is free to us; but it came as a result of the greatest cost to our Lord. In all dispensations, there is a period of life after salvation during which we live on this earth as believers in Jesus Christ. God does not take us out of this life immediately after believing in Jesus Christ (apart from the exception of deathbed conversions). Therefore, there must be some particular prescribed lifestyle or some protocol by which we must live. During the Jewish Age (this portion of the book of Luke takes place in the Jewish Age), this was the Law, here, called the commandments and statutes of the Lord. Both Zechariah and Elizabeth followed what the Law prescribed for them to do. Walking blamelessly does not mean that they lived without sin in their lives; nor does this mean that neither person ever violated the Law. The Law provided actions which they must take when they sin, and Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth followed all of the necessary provisions of the Law.
Luke 1:7  But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.

Just as with Abram and Sarai, 2000 years previous, Elizabeth was barren and they were both old. Because of this, neither one expected a child. They had simply come to the understanding—perhaps when they entered into their 50's—that this was a blessing that God would withhold from them.

Had Elizabeth gone through menopause? I would guess not (although God is able to do whatever). The Bible calls Elizabeth barren, which suggests that there is some sort of physical anomaly making it difficult or impossible for her to have children.

Luke 1:8  Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty,...

Zechariah belonged to the Abijah division of priests, and he came to Jerusalem for two weeks out of the year to serve in the Holy Temple. There were rituals which were done over and over again—rituals which were revealed in the Bible, in the books of Moses. However, these rituals were not actually observed by the general public. No one other than other priests actually saw what Zechariah did (and it is most likely that the priests did their duties as required, without hanging around to watch one another). For the various rituals of the Temple, there was probably a strict regimen of what got done when (given the legalism of that day), and it is very possible that Zechariah performed his duties alone in the Temple.

As discussed earlier, there were 24 divisions of priests, so each division was responsible for the Temple duties 2 weeks out of the year.

Luke 1:9  ...according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

Unlike our churches, people did not just wander in and out of the Temple. The priests carried out specific functions within the Temple, but the general public did not go into the Temple—not ever. There was no special day of the year when the public was invited in; there were no tours given to the public.

In some places in the gospels, it will appear as if people are in the Temple gathering; but these passages are actually referring to places outside the Temple where people gathered (some of these places appear to be covered). Herod saw to it that there were a variety of open areas that the Jews could utilize as they saw fit. For example: Matt. 21:12, 14, 15, 23 24:1 26:55 27:5.

Priests and Levites had duties which could involve things in the Temple, but even they did not just wander in and out willy nilly. If they went into the Temple, then they had a specific

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An older or experienced priest might teach a young priest what is necessary for their particular ritual.
reason to do so. The Temple was not a place for priests or people to go and hang out. What occurred in the Temple was a set of specific ceremonies and duties, performed by those of the priesthood, as prescribed in the Mosaic Law. For the most part, no one else observed the following of these rituals unless two priests entered into the Temple at the same time to perform separate functions. All of these rituals had meanings; they all meant something, even if the participants did not really understand the meaning of what they did.

Zacharias was to burn incense in the Temple, and this responsibility was determined by lot. My guess is, so many people from the Abijah line showed up during their appointed times, and then they drew lots to determine which individuals would do what and when. This determining by lot was simply a custom that the priests engaged in; there is no specific set up in the Mosaic Law for priests to do this. There were just a great many priests, so the rituals at the Temple were split up between these priests. Because there were these 24 families of priests, and many in each of these families, they had some system by which they determined which persons would serve in the Temple. Again, notice the details here: each division of the family had a different time period during which they served in the Temple, and his family, the division of Abijah, was serving during this time.

Drawing lots would have determined which persons from that particular branch of Levites would participate in the sacred duties.

We don’t know if Zacharias has done this before—I would assume that he had. All that we find here appears to be routine; and nothing in the text suggests that this is Zacharias’s first time or that anything appears to be out of the ordinary.

These are historical details that, 100–200 years later, would not have been known, because 100 years from now, this Temple will not be standing and these organized rituals would no longer be taking place. Even if a person had access to the Old Testament, not everything described here comes out of the Old Testament. This means that Luke wrote his biography of Jesus during the proper time period—and, no doubt, before A.D. 70, at which time the Temple would be destroyed).

Establishing the Canon of Scripture: Let me go off on a tangent here: you may know that there are several gospels not found in the Bible, along with many epistles and several apocalyptic stories. How did someone know to include the Book of Luke, but to exclude the Gospel of Saint Thomas? The canon of Scripture was closed before 100 A.D. when John the Apostle engraved the final words of Revelation while on the Isle of Patmos. Prior to that time, the gospels and epistles [letters] had been written, and then circulated from church to church.

For instance, Paul would write a letter to the local church at Corinth, and the elders of Corinth recognized that it was from Paul (in many cases, these epistles were hand-delivered by someone close to Paul and trusted in the church). At some point, these letters and gospels were copied and recopied, and circulated to other local churches in other cities. “Paul wrote a letter to you? We would love to have a copy of that so that we can read it in our church.” The various local churches in the first century, (at least
informally) recognized the authority of the writings which they received. These gospels and letters were copied and they found their way from church to church. These writings were then preserved from century to century.

Did any of these early churches (in operation prior to A.D. 100) begin to develop a registry of authoritative writings? That is, did various people begin making a record of which letters Paul had written? Did they add to this list the biographies of Jesus which had been written? If they did, we are unaware of it. I suspect that many of them did develop such lists, if only informally.

I have been a collector of things for much of my life. One things that collectors often strive for is having complete sets. In order to have a complete set of anything, you must first know, what is in that set. It would make sense that various local churches were aware of the gospels and epistles circulating, and that many, desiring more divine information, would seek out manuscripts of books and letters which they did not already have. The Apostles and those associated with the Apostles traveled about frequently, as did many people in that era; and it would become known that, for instance, Paul sent out an epistle to the Philippians, a letter which he wrote while in prison. Or, they would find out that Paul wrote a couple of letters to Timothy. When people in other churches became aware of such a letter, they would want their own copy, so that their own pastor might read it and explain it to them.

It is my contention that many local churches began to develop a list of the books and letters which were authoritative; and that they would begin to search out those letters or books. When Paul or Peter or Apollos traveled through town, they would often ask about letters that they lacked. “Do you happen to be carrying with you the letter written to the Ephesians?” a church leader might ask them. “Or 2 Timothy?” This is conjecture on my part, but I am reasonably certain that I have described accurately what happened in the early local church.

We have the gospels and the letters from this era; but we do not have any local church registry as such from the 1st century. We logically know that registries had to have existed, whether formally committed to writing or not. (Who knows, maybe one day, one will be discovered?)

There were several well-known teachers from the 2nd century who cited specific books as authoritative, meaning: they believed these books or letters to have been written in the 1st century by either one of the 12 Apostles or by men closely associated with them. Some of the clues which we have studied—such as the drawing lots in order to perform Temple services—would be strong indicators that a book had been written in the 1st century.

Of 10 church fathers of the 2nd century, the only book of the New Testament which was not cited as authoritative was 3 John. To my knowledge, none of them cited works not found
in the Bible today. That is, by this 2nd century, no respected church father quoted from the Gospel of Saint Thomas.

By the 3rd century, the most well-known church fathers (Cyril of Jerusalem, Eusebius, Jerome and Augustine) recognized almost exactly the same set of books as authoritative. Cyril did not quote from Revelation and Eusebius named 5 of the general epistles as disputed. However, Jerome and Augustine held to the same New Testament as we do.

In the first few hundred years of the church, at least 6 individuals specified what the New Testament canon was, which we might understand to be a complete set of the writings which had been accepted as authoritative. Athanasius (367) agrees with our New Testament canon, and Barococcio (circa 206) and Apostolic (circa 300) also have the same canon, except that they leave out the book of Revelation. 2 others leave out some of the general epistles (those letters not written by Paul).

At least 3 early translations were made, and 2 of them were very similar to our canon. These translations left out a few of the general epistles and the Old Syriac translation left out the book of Revelation as well. However, when making a translation of these various books and letters from the 1st century, there was clearly concern to choose the correct books and letters. No one wanted to pick a gospel from the 2nd century, for instance, and throw that into the mix. Anything written in the 2nd century would be automatically rejected, as being from the wrong era.

There were also 4 church councils (there were very likely many others, but we know of these 4): in Nicea, Hippo, Carthage and a second in Carthage (these councils took place between 325–419). 3 of these councils agreed completely on the books which we use today. One listed a few of the general epistles as disputed. A church council would have involved a number of men who would gather and they would discuss the various books and letters; and they would discuss their era, their authors, their origin and their contents.

Whether making a list of authoritative books, making a translation, or holding a meeting of recognized teachers, there were 2 considerations which were a part of this process: (1) was the book historically seen as authentic and authoritative; and (2) was the book associated either with and Apostle or someone closely associated with an Apostle? If there were further concerns, no doubt the actual content of the book was up for discussion as well.

Lesson 022: Luke 1:5–9  
The Canon of Scripture Part Two

You may recall that the passage which set off this discussion is:

Luke 1:8–9 Now while he [Zechariah] was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.
Because this passage refers to a tradition of the Jewish priesthood not found in the Pentateuch, and because this tradition would have disappeared after the Temple was destroyed, this historical reference helps to authenticate the book of Luke as having been written in the 1st century prior to A.D. 70. This lead us into a discussion of canonicity of the New Testament books.

**Noncanonical books:** Now, what about books like the Acts of Peter, the Apocryphon of James, the Gospel of Saint Thomas, the Epistle to the Laodicians, etc? Many of these non-canonical books had not been written, even by the 2nd century A.D. Many of them we know by name, but are no longer extent (e.g., the Gospel of the Egyptians). If something was not recognized by any church as authoritative, then there was no reason to make many copies of it and to pass it around. Some individual collectors may have wanted some apocryphal books, but churches, as a whole, did not. A church might have to pay for a manuscript to be copied and they would used this manuscript to teach from; so they would not be purchasing unimportant and non-authoritative books. Therefore, such writings simply died out, apart from a mention here or there in literature from that era.

There are maybe a half-dozen books which come out of the 1st century: the Passion Narrative, the Lost Sayings Gospel Q, the Signs Gospel; and a few books which may have been written in the 1st century: the Didache, the Gospel of Thomas, Oxyrhynchus 1224 Gospel, the Sophia (wisdom) of Jesus Christ, the Egerton Gospel, the Gospel of Peter and Secret Mark, although the range of dates takes most of these outside of the 1st century.

Among these non-canonical books, there are about 10 which are mentioned in ancient literature or referred to by an ancient father (some of whom are portrayed historically as heretical). What we do not have is, 3 or 4 individuals, translations or canons recognizing any of these books as authoritative or canonical. None of these books are among the complete set of authoritative writings from the 1st century.

Do not ever think that some church council came along hundreds of years later and made the ultimate decision based on this sort of evaluation: “These books should be in the canon because we like them; these books should not because we don’t like them.” We have over 2 dozen witnesses from the first few centuries, and not one of them says, “I think that the Sophia of Jesus Christ deserves to be considered as an authoritative book.” (And these are witnesses whom we can document from this era; there would have been many more whose writings disappeared.)

Many of these noncanonical books can be found online, and when you read them, you will notice something which distinguishes them from, say, the Book of Luke. Luke is filled with historical citations and serious history. There are things found in the Book of Luke, which, had it been written a hundred or so years later, would simply have not been found (for instance, how the work was distributed among the priests). You do not find this same historical precision in these apocryphal books.
There are a host of problems. The dialogue, if any, is often weird. There are doctrines not found or supported by canonical books. Sometimes, we know that there are specific inaccuracies.

If you have a good working knowledge of the New Testament, and then you read a passage from New Testament apocryphal literature, the contrast between the accepted New Testament and the apocryphal literature is stark. Often, you can read a few paragraphs into the noncanonical book and you will conclude, “No way anyone would think that this belongs in Scripture.”

Interesting enough, none of these individuals or groups had a complete and thorough understanding of what it meant to be canonical; or what it meant for canonical books to be inspired. The books which were a part of this complete collection were determined first; and later, exactly what canonicity meant was determined. Similarly, the correct understanding of the inspiration of Scriptures was developed long after the canon was determined (the books in the canon are the inspired Word of God). More importantly, many of the fundamental doctrines of the faith were developed after the canon was determined.

Even the doctrines of the Catholic church were not fully developed until hundreds of years after Saint Jerome (he translated the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures into Latin; and his translation is used as the basis for many authorized translations (authorized by the Catholic Church). Because nearly all of the specifically Catholic doctrines were developed hundreds of years after Jerome, there was no well-organized Catholic Church then as we have today which pronounced from on high which books were canonical. There was no on high authority in the Catholic Church at the time that the canon was determined and confirmed.

Unless otherwise noted, the ESV; capitalized is used below.

**Miscellaneous Principles Regarding the Canon of Scripture**

1. When it comes to the canon of Scripture, there is actually a selection process which is involved. We have already studied that in Luke 1:1–4. There have been many who have undertaken to compile a narrative; and there were many eyewitnesses—obviously, eyewitnesses who were willing and eager to share what they remember. Luke was speaking specifically of gospel material; but it is certainly applicable to all of the written material from believers that was available. Luke himself, rather than collect all of this material into an anthology, took it upon himself to compile these narratives into a single biography, one which he himself had been careful to verify the material (Luke 1:3).

2. This may help us to understand why, even though Paul clearly wrote more letters to the various local churches—and sometimes multiple letters to the same church—not all of those letters were preserved. This was not by accident but by design.

3. The letters written by Paul (and later, by others) were designed to be read within
the local churches. John was told to write down what he saw and circulate that to the seven specified churches. Rev. 1:10–11 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

4. The letters (epistles) written were to have a wider audience than just the church to which it had been written. Paul, near the end of his letter to the Colossians, writes: And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea. (Col. 4:16; ESV) This tells us that, even though Paul wrote this letter specifically to the Colossians, they were to share it with the local church at Laodicea.

5. There is also Peter's witness to Paul's writings. And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. (2Peter 3:15–16; ESV; emphasis mine). Peter, in this passage, has elevated Paul’s writings to the status of being Scriptures. This is a milestone. Writers in the 1st century may or may not have realized that they were writing Scriptures, but Peter clearly does.


You will note that all of these principles come directly from the New Testament writers.

These points were taken from Norman Geisler and William Nix; A General Introduction to the Bible; Chicago; Moody Press, ©1968, pp. 184–186 (highly edited).

Geisler and Nix: In summary, the first hundred years of the existence of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament reveal that virtually every one of them was quoted as authoritative and recognized as canonical by men who were themselves the younger contemporaries of the Apostolic Age.27

A similar recognition of authority occurred in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th centuries—which witnesses have already been studied back in the introductory lessons.

There were a lot of writings to come out of the first few centuries of the church. Historically, they fall into 4 different classifications.

### Classification of the Early Writings (Geisler and Nix)

1. **The books accepted by all are called the Homologoumena.**
   - 20 of the 27 books of the New Testament were accepted from the beginning and almost universally. These would be the books of Matthew through Philemon, along with 1Peter and 1John.
   - Some might place Philemon, 1Peter and 1John in the category below. However, according to Geisler and Nix, *there is almost no evidence that those who possessed these three books did not consider them authentic and apostolic*. This quotation reveals to us the organic nature of the development of the canon of Scripture. When we buy a Bible today, we think of it as a singular book (which it is); but for 4 centuries, most Christians—even the most pious and learned—did not have a full set of New Testament Scriptures. Completing this set was not a very easy thing to do. However, for many believers, this was a very important thing to achieve.

2. **The Antilegomena.**
   - These books did not have uniform or universal acceptance.
   - This would be the general epistles, apart from 1Peter and 1John; and the book of Revelation.
   - These books were carefully examined—some of them for centuries. *Hebrews* had no named author even by tradition; *Revelation* was weird; *Jude, 2John* and *3John* were all very short. *2Peter* is one of the most thoroughly discussed books with regards to canonicity. The chief problem is, it is a much different style of writing than 1Peter. Although Saint Jerome suggested that there was a different amanuensis (an amanuensis is a person employed to write or type what another dictates) employed, that has never been a universally accepted explanation.
   - On the other hand, it is very difficult to dispute the content of Hebrews and *Revelation*.

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3. The Pseudopigrapha.

1) These are the books called *totally absurd and impious* by Eusebius.

2) These books certainly have some historic value, containing within them the teachings of Gnosticism, asceticism and docetism, as people of those leanings sometimes tried to duplicate the authority of the Scriptures.

(1) Gnosticism is a prominent heretical movement of the 2nd century Christian Church, partly of pre-Christian origin. Gnostic doctrine taught that the world was created and ruled by a lesser divinity, the demiurge, and that Christ was an emissary of the remote supreme divine being, esoteric knowledge (gnosis) of whom enabled the redemption of the human spirit.

(2) Asceticism is severe self-discipline and avoidance of all forms of indulgence, typically for religious reasons.

(3) Docetism is the doctrine that the phenomenon of Jesus, his historical and bodily existence, and above all the human form of Jesus, was mere semblance without any true reality. Broadly it is taken as the belief that Jesus only seemed to be human, and that his human form was an illusion. Whereas, today, there are some groups and individuals who have a difficult time accepting Jesus as divine; there were apparently many in the early era who could not accept Jesus as human.

3) By the 9th century, Photius listed 280 such books; and more have been discovered since then.

4) These would include *the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of the Egyptians; the Acts of Peter, the Acts of John; the lost epistle to the Corinthians, the epistle of Paul to the Laodiceans; the Apocalypse of Peter, the Apocalypse of Paul,* etc.

5) The various councils, church fathers, and canonical listings never listed any of these books as being possibly canonical.

4. The Apocrypha.

1) Differentiating these books from those in the previous category can be both nuanced and arbitrary.

2) Generally speaking, these books were rejected by respected early church fathers, translations and councils; they do occasionally appear in local ecclesiastical canons and Bible translations. There were even some church fathers who accepted some of these books.

3) As an example, there is the Epistle of Pseudo-Barnabas, circa A.D. 70–79 (this date is in dispute and some believe it to be a 2nd century document). It is found in the Sinitic manuscript (Aleph) and it is mentioned in the table of contents of Bezae (circa 550). It is quoted as Scripture by Clement of Alexandria and by Origen.
Classification of the Early Writings (Geisler and Nix)

4) Geisler and Nix discuss 10 more books, including the Second Epistle of Clement, the Apocalypse of Peter, the Acts of Paul and Thecla.
5) It is interesting that these are listed as apocrypha, as nearly all of them were written in the 2nd century.

This information was taken from Norman Geisler and William Nix; *A General Introduction to the Bible*; Chicago; Moody Press, ©1968, pp. 195–205. They go into much more detail than I do. Definitions of Gnosticism, asceticism and docetism pulled off the internet in a google search.

For me, this is one of the most interesting topics regarding the Bible. If you are of the same mind, then I strongly recommend Geisler and Nix’s “A General Introduction to the Bible.” I was lucky enough to be exposed to this book early on in my Christian life, which book I still have and still refer to today. You should be able to find this book for less than $10 (which includes shipping). Geisler and Nix go through each book of the New Testament and show how, from the very beginning, they were recognized as being authoritative.

Lesson 023: Luke 1:5–14  An Angel Announces the Birth of John the Herald

In our study of the first chapter of Luke, so far, you may have wondered how many decades would it take to complete this book. We will move more quickly when the passage allows.

Luke 1:5–7  In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.

The narrative of chapter 1 focuses on a married Levite couple, Zechariah and Elizabeth, two mature believers.

Luke 1:8–9  Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

Zechariah, as a priest, had responsibilities once or twice a year at the Temple. He would burn the incense at this point in his service. We are told that his service is determined by lot, something that was a custom, but not set forth in the Law of Moses.

Luke 1:10  And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense.
Luke is setting the scene for what is happening; and it is unclear whether their prayers are related to what is about to happen. Were they similar to a prayer meeting today? Were they praying for the coming of the Messiah? We do not know, but, there are many people outside during this time when Zacharias (Zechariah) was in the Temple lighting the incense, as it was his turn to do that.

Priests are attending to their duties in and around the Temple, and Zacharias is burning incense; and a large multitude of people are outside of the Temple praying. Something is about to take place, and it appears that Zacharias is alone in the Temple at this moment.

During the time of the Mosaic Law, there is a separation of the priests from the people. They were two separate classes of people. The priests who have a function within the Temple are able to enter into the Temple. The people cannot do this. The people generally knew what the priests did in the Temple, by means of the writings of Moses, but this was not something that they could actually observe. They knew about these things from the Scriptures; but there were no tours of the Temple. No one got to watch the lighting of the candles or of the incense, etc.

Also, the priests did not simply wander into the Temple to hang out. The Temple was not some sort of members only club. They only went into the Temple for their specific functions. They did not complete their tasks and then hang around to see what else would happen after. They went into the Temple, performed their duties, and then exited.

In the future, we will study passages which sound as if there are people going into the Temple. That is never the case. Although the Temple was first built as a two-room building, with some storage buildings around the outside, this Temple structure by Herod had many more public areas around the Temple. So, the people never actually enter into the Temple proper, but but they go into one of the public areas around the Temple. Sometimes when we read the word Temple, it really means, Temple grounds.

We should never confuse the Temple with a modern-day church. No one, apart from the priests, ever goes into the Temple proper. All that was done inside of the Temple was representative and forward looking (that is, Temple rituals were typical). When Zacharias burned incense, for example, this was the sweet savor of our Lord’s sacrifice wafting up into heaven.

Our Lord’s sacrifice is portrayed as sweet smelling to God. This is because, before God, we stink. If you have ever been near a days-old dead carcass (a dog, armadillo, or whatever that has been run over), there is a nearly indescribable and unbearable odor which exudes from this once living creature. This is how we smell to God (I am speaking metaphorically). Our sinfulness makes us totally unable to have fellowship with God. God can only, as the Holy Being, judge our sins. Apart from Jesus, there is no recourse that we have in life. Apart from Him, we would always be unbearably putrid before a holy God.

Let me set up an analogy. Let’s say you had the opportunity to live in a house littered with dead animal carcasses piled up in every room. Does that sound like a pleasant life? This
is what we are like to God. God no more wants to live with us forever than we want to live in a house filled with rotting animal carcasses.

What is key here is, Jesus Christ dies for our sins. All of our sins are placed on Him and judged. Therefore, God is able to fellowship with us because we are in His Son (those of us who have believed in Him). God no longer smells the rotting carcass of our sins, but He smells the sweet incense that is burned in the Temple; He smells the sweet savor of the animal sacrifices. Now, literally, God the Father accepts the offering of Christ Jesus in place of our judgment. God loves the Son and we are in Christ Jesus so God loves us.

There is a second understanding of the incense, that it represents the prayers of the priest going up to God. This could be how the people at this time understood the burning of the incense and they may have prayed at that time, thinking that it was the best time to pray to God. If this was the thinking, then this would be a misconception. God accepts prayers at anytime from those who believe in Him. We understand this today as having access to the Father through His Son. In that era, they would not have realized that.

All of the things which took place in the Temple were representative analogies which looked forward in time (theologically, we say that these are \textit{typical} or \textit{types}). People of the Old Testament did not understand typology. They did not know, for instance, that the Ark within the Temple represented Jesus Christ. The gold represented His Deity; the acacia wood represented His humanity. The blood sprinkled on the Mercy Seat (which was over the Ark) once a year by the High Priest represents the spiritual death of our Lord for our sins. No one in the Old Testament would have understood this at all. In fact, it took awhile—perhaps hundreds of years—before we in the New Testament had a handle on the numerous types found in the Old Testament. Some were revealed to us—particularly in the book of Hebrews—but I don’t believe that anyone in the early church fully appreciated just how pervasive and numerous these types are.

In our narrative, Zacharias is in the Temple burning incense; his priestly duty at this particular time.

\textbf{Luke 1:11} And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

Zechariah is at the altar of incense, which is his responsibility that day, and an angel appears to him. This is way out of the ordinary.

In the Bible, there are some fantastical things which occur, because much of the Bible records God’s interaction with man on earth. Therefore, there are miracles, signs and very unusual events (like seeing an angel). One must not think that the Bible talks about such things happening on a regular basis—like things which happen every few days or every few weeks. Historically, these are very rare events.

Interestingly enough, the last time (historically speaking from this point in Luke’s gospel) that an angel appeared to man is in the book of Zechariah, whose ministry took place
between 520–518 B.C. (the ministry that we are aware of). So, right now, in our narrative, an angel has appeared to Zacharias, the Levitical priest; and, about 500 years previously, an angel appeared to Zechariah the prophet, the man who Zacharias is probably ultimately named after.²⁹

Zechariah Sees the Angel in the Temple (a graphic); from the National Catholic Register accessed May 3, 2019.

Luke 1:12a And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him,...

I primarily use the ESV; capitalized throughout; which uses the name Zechariah (in order to maintain some congruity with the Old Testament). Translators Green, Haweis, Niobi, Pickering, Charles Thompson, Young, and Webster all try to maintain consistency between the testaments by using Zechariah. The translations AUV, ALT, AOB, AS, BSV, BV, CGV, EMTV, FAA, HRB, LONT, MLV, NTVR, RHB6r, RNT, TDB, UTV, VW, WB, WEB all use the Greek form, Zacharias (this is not a definitive list³⁰).

The word troubled is the aorist passive indicative of a verb which means to cause one inward commotion, take away his calmness of mind, disturb his equanimity; to disquiet, make restless; to stir up; to trouble; to strike one’s spirit with fear and dread; to render anxious or distressed; to perplex the mind of one by suggesting scruples or doubts. Seeing an angel would be a very disconcerting experience for anyone.

The aorist tense means, right when Zechariah saw the angel, he was disturbed; the passive voice indicates that Zechariah was suddenly troubled; he did not think about it and then become troubled. The indicative mood is the mood of reality—this is exactly how he felt at this moment.

Zechariah is shook up by what he sees.

Luke 1:12b ...and fear fell upon him.

²⁹ More than likely, Zechariah is a family name; but possibly taken originally from the prophet.
³⁰ These are the translations which I have in my e-sword.
Seeing an angel is so outside the range of normalcy that Zacharias is upset, troubled and afraid. Any normal person would react with some fear and trepidation.

This suggests to us that Zacharias recognized that this was an other than earthly being. However, people rarely spend any amount of time in the Bible describing what an angel actually looks like—and there are certainly times when angels do not look much different from man (that seems to be the indication of the text). In some instances, we are informed that angels appear to be made of light.

The Temple was not a place that priests went into to hang out. They had specific duties that they performed; they went in, performed those duties, and then exited. So, whatever time was needed to light the candlesticks or to burn the incense was the amount of time that a priest remained in the Temple. When a priest completed his task, then he exited. So Zechariah is mostly likely in the Temple alone with the angel. Because the angel is there, speaking to him, Zechariah is going to be delayed.

Exactly how Zechariah recognizes that this being is other worldly is not told to us. Again, that would require a description, which he has not given us.

Luke 1:13a  But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah,...

There is no indication that angels can look into our skulls and figure out what we are thinking. However, angels are geniuses and they understand body language and microfacial expressions. Therefore, the angel could see the Zechariah was obviously afraid (I would not be surprised if Zechariah jumped). So the angel seeks to calm Zechariah, and with good reason. The angel is going to communicate some important information to him. A soul filled with fear cannot take in information. A person who is afraid cannot think.

Luke 1:13b  ...for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.

First of all, here is Zechariah standing by the altar of incense, which altar represents believers praying to God; and there are people praying outside the Temple; so the angel tells Zechariah that his prayer (petition) has been heard. We do not know how many times Zechariah has prayed to have a son, but it is presented here as a single prayer.

The angel tells Zechariah to name his son John, which means Jehovah is a gracious giver or Jehovah’s gift, which is the proper way to see a child. However, in this case, the gift of John was not simply for Zechariah and his wife, but for all the Jewish people.

This son would become John the Baptist (better named John the Herald). He is not to be confounded with the Apostle John, who wrote the book of John, the epistles which bear the name John, and the book of Revelation. These are two very different men.

Lesson 024: Luke 1:13–15 John the Herald as a Nazarite
Zechariah is a priest and he is doing his duty in the Temple. Suddenly, an angel appears to him while he is apparently alone, in the Temple, attending to the priestly duty of lighting the incense.

Luke 1:13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.

Both Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth believe in the Revealed God, the God of the Old Testament. They are mature believers and they are a mature couple who are without children. They have apparently been praying for a child (a prayer which they may not have uttered for a decade or two now), God heard that prayer and He is answering it in the affirmative. The angel has just promised Zechariah that his wife would bear them a son, and that he is to name the son John.

Luke 1:14a And you will have joy and gladness,...

Zechariah would have both an inner joy and an overt, expressed joy. The first noun is the feminine singular noun chara (χαρά) [pronounced khahr-AH], which means, joy, rejoicing, gladness; the joy received from you. Strong's #5479. The word translated gladness is the feminine singular noun agalliasis (ἀγαλλίασις) [pronounced ag-al-LEE-as-is], which means, exultation, extreme joy, gladness. Strong's #20. Literally, this reads There will be [or, he will be] joy and gladness to you.

Throughout the Bible, there have been several births which come to a couple later in life: Isaac was born to Abraham when Abraham was 100. Jacob and Esau were born to Isaac when he was 60. There is a right time for a person to come onto the scene, and these were the right times.

If you have seen a play or have been involved in a play, you have a number of characters, and they walk out onto the stage at specific times to deliver their lines and to interact with those already in view. There is a right time for them to come into a scene and a wrong time. An actor who walks onto the stage at the wrong time confuses the flow of the play and the action. If he walks out at the wrong time, then what can he say or who can he say it to?

God’s plan on this earth is extremely detailed and we have a particular time when we are to come into this world and interact with those around us. There was a right time for Elizabeth and Zechariah to give birth; there was a right time for their son John to enter human history. Part of John’s entrance into this world will be the way that he enters the world.

Luke 1:14b ...and many will rejoice at his birth,...

Zechariah and Elizabeth had prayed for many years for a child, and, given their ages, it is my guess that they have not prayed this prayer for over a decade or two. But the angel
tells Zechariah that not only would they have a child and be filled with joy as a result, but others would rejoice at John’s birth as well. His birth would not be a private, family affair. There will be enough unusual things occur associated with John’s birth, so that, many people—perhaps thousands—will be thinking about his birth. Many would understand that John is born by divine fiat, and therefore, they would realize that his birth was significant.

If you are reading this, you may already be aware that John will go out into the desert-wilderness and people will come to him; they will come to be baptized by him and to hear what he has to say (something that we will study in the book of Luke). Now, on what basis will people come out to John while he is at the Jordan River baptizing? For people to come to see him, they have to find him and be willing to take a trip of 2 or 3 hours. There will not be any signs with arrows on them saying, this way to John’s baptism. How did they know about him? How did they know he was there? Let me suggest to you that, his birth will be so significant that it will impact thousands of people. They will all know about it and they will all understand that his birth has divine significance. So, when they hear about this same man, as an adult, being out in the desert-wilderness, proclaiming the Messiah—they have to go out and hear him.

As a man, John would be Herald to the True King, which would cause many to rejoice. If the herald has arrived, then the King is not far behind.

Luke 1:14  And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth,...

John would be the herald of the Lord; he would announce the Lord’s coming. Therefore, he has an important part to play in the overall scheme of things.

That we might understand this better, if you have ever seen a state of the union speech, right before the President appears, a man comes out and announces, in a clear and loud voice, the President of the United States! That man is a herald. This would be John’s job.

The Lord is far more important than anyone and so, John coming on the scene is the prelude to the coming of the Messiah—the greatest event in human history. It is only logical that the most important Person in human history be formally announced. John would announce the Lord’s arrival.

Luke 1:15a  ...for he will be great before the Lord.

John is going to be great before God. John will go out into the desert-wilderness and begin proclaiming the coming of the Messiah and he will offer men the baptism of repentance (that is, a baptism which proclaims a change of mind). Men who come out to see John will be inspired. Religious types will be somewhat angry at him. But, the Bible tells us that John will be great before the L ORD.

What does it mean for John to be great before the Lord? It means that God has a very important purpose for John, and that John will fulfill that purpose. There is a place where God wants John to be; and there are things that God wants John to do. John will fulfill
these things expected by God. Even today, John the herald is one of the most well-known characters from the Bible, despite the fact that he had a ministry that was very limited in scope.

Now, at this point in the narrative, we are still inside of the Temple and John has not yet been born. Zechariah, a priest, has lit his incense, as was his duty, and an angel has appeared to him. The angel makes this announcement to him:

Luke 1:13–15a But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord.

The angel tells Zechariah that his prayer has been heard and that he and his wife would bear a son—having a son would be the answer to their prayer. They were to name their son John. He would become John the herald (more popularly known as John the baptizer).

As an aside, John the Herald is not the same man as John the Apostle. John the Herald will have a very limited ministry, much of which takes place out in the desert wilderness. I don’t know that we have any clues as to the length of time that John will publically minister, telling of the Messiah-King to come; but let me suggest that this occurs over a period of a few weeks or a few months. It would make little sense for John’s public ministry to be longer than the Lord’s public ministry (John will be executed during the Lord’s public ministry).

Luke 1:15b And he must not drink wine or strong drink,...

The angel tells Zechariah that John is not to drink wine or strong drink. There are two possible reasons for this: (1) John could be genetically predisposed to alcoholism, in which case, a few periods of time when he is drunk will result in his becoming an alcoholic; or (2) John will be a Nazarite (also, Nazirite), which is described in Num. 6. What is possible is, the angel read to Zechariah that passage of Num. 6, but only a portion of it is recorded here. I lean towards the second explanation; so what does that mean?

What does it mean to be a Nazarite?

The Nazarite and the Nazarite Vows

The Nazarite is a very unusual office or calling. They are not to be confused with Nazarenes, which is simply a designation for someone who comes from Nazareth (Jesus is raised in Nazareth so He will be called a Nazarene).
The Nazarite and the Nazarite Vows

A person becomes a Nazarite through a vow which he takes. This vow is described in Num 6:1–4:

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When either a man or a woman makes a special vow, the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to the LORD, he shall separate himself from wine and strong drink. He shall drink no vinegar made from wine or strong drink and shall not drink any juice of grapes or eat grapes, fresh or dried. All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, not even the seeds or the skins.

Few things are more closely associated with the earth and with the world than the grapevine; and the Nazirite is not to partake of it. This is symbolic of him having a heavenly calling.

You will notice that the Nazarite is separated for a limited amount of time (here called, the days of his separation).

Num. 6:5 "All the days of his vow of separation, no razor shall touch his head. Until the time is completed for which he separates himself to the LORD, he shall be holy. He shall let the locks of hair of his head grow long." (ESV; capitalized)

This is a very unusual vow, one that we might expect to come across more often than we do. Many identify Samson, Samuel and John the Herald as Nazarites. Samson clearly is, as the portion of Scripture where he is found actually speaks of him as being a Nazarite. Samuel is not called a Nazarite and I don't believe that John is either. This word is only found in Num. 6 Judges 13:5, 7 16:17 Amos 2:11–12.

In his life, John will seem very much like a Nazarite, but that word will not be applied to him in the gospels.

Luke 1:15c  ...and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

Or: And God would fill him with the Holy Spirit out from his mother's womb. So God would empower John from birth by God the Holy Spirit. The preposition found here is ek (ἐκ) [pronounced ehk], which means, out of, out from, from, by, of. Strong's #1537.

Luke 1:15  For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

Twice in Scripture, we have a contrast between being filled with alcohol and being filled with the Spirit. In Eph. 5:22, Paul admonishes his reader, Do not be drunk on wine, which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit. In Luke, there is no mention of drunkenness, but on complete abstinence from alcohol. I believe that this contrast is one of control; we can choose to be controlled by alcohol or by the Holy Spirit (the believer can make such a choice). There is the implication that it cannot be both. You are either controlled by one or the other; but never by both.
It seems reasonable that this is true of any intoxicant. You cannot be controlled by the intoxicant (whether it be marijuana, oxycontin, fentanyl, amphetamines, etc.) and the Spirit at the same time.

In the Old Testament, only a few people are said to be empowered by God the Holy Spirit, and many times, this was when they had a particular task to do. Here is a rare instance where this appears to begin at birth filled with the Holy Spirit—in fact, I don’t know that there is another instance of this in human history. This is a very unusual situation, and I don’t know that I can explain it. God respects our volition; we are created with free will. God does not intrude upon our free will, and He does not save us unless we desire to be saved. We express this desire by faith in Jesus Christ. At that moment, we are saved; and, at that moment, we are filled by God the Holy Spirit. We lose this filling when we sin and it is restored to us when we name our sins to God (1John 1:9). That is a Church Age doctrine, but it seems to be consistent with past dispensations, apart from the filling of the Spirit. In the previous dispensation, men enjoyed fellowship with God if they believed in the Revealed God and had no unconfessed sin in their lives.

The key might certainly just be the text. Just as accurately, half of this verse could read: ...and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even out from his mother's womb. So, these words do not demand that John is filled with the Holy Spirit immediately upon exiting his mother's womb, but very possibly as a child (this can occur by means of a volitional choice). John, from a very young age, believed in the Revealed God. Therefore, he enjoyed this filling of the Holy Spirit, which meant that he was guided and taught by the Spirit throughout most of his life.

So that there is no misunderstanding, being taught by God the Holy Spirit does not mean that John meditated for hours on end, emptying his mind of all thought. The Holy Spirit teaches specific content, and that content would be the contents of Scripture. By way of illustration, let's say that you sat in the same room with one of the greatest teachers of all time, but that teacher did not say anything, would you benefit by his teaching? Of course not; you do not benefit by being in proximity with a good teacher, but by hearing words from his mouth.

So, even though John’s actual training is not described beyond what we read here, it would be reasonable to assume that he exposed himself to the Word of God, whether it be taught in the synagogues or at the Temple during the holy holidays. John had the added benefit of being taught by God the Holy Spirit as he heard the Scriptures read. Although the Bible does not spend a lengthy period of time with John’s teaching, we hear enough of it to know that he often peppered his teaching with passages from the Old Testament (which was the Bible of the Hebrew people in the first century). Therefore, he clearly knew Scripture.


We have millions of people in the United States who think that we are in a ship about to crash into an iceberg because Donald Trump is president (I write this in 2018–2019); and
previously, the other half of the country believed this to be the case when Barack Obama
was president. The key to the great prosperity and freedom that we enjoy here in the
United States is salvation through faith in Jesus Christ followed by the intake of Bible
doctrine. If there is a reasonable sized pivot of believers with maximum doctrine in their
souls, then our nation will continue to enjoy great peace and prosperity. And, if we reject
God, and His Word and His blessings, then, no matter who is president, it is going to be
a very bumpy and unhappy ride, generally speaking (supergrace believers will always have
God’s grace overruling national disaster in their personal lives).

There are so many negative things which could happen to the United States, which God
has been restraining for decades. One simple example; our debt. Why are we not
Greece? Why is our country not falling apart because we are so far in debt? That is
because the United States dollar is the preferred currency of the world. If that changes,
then our lives change dramatically in the United States. We also have the slow moving
disaster of added debt increasing the cost of servicing of that debt in our national budget
(which has exploded in the past 10 years). This is a very disconcerting direction that our
country is going in, but, because of God’s grace, we still enjoy the greatest prosperity today
of any nation in human history. But this is because of God’s blessing, not for any other
reason. Remove the spiritual pivot from the United States and that would remove all of
God’s blessing.

Do not doubt that the prosperity and blessing of the United States could change overnight;
and the life that we have known and enjoyed in our country could change in ways that we
could not imagine. There are many people who are still alive who suffered through the
Great Depression, which was the last great national discipline that our nation was under.
For the most part, very few of us have suffered under national divine discipline. There are
several generations of people who would completely fall apart if God removed His blessing
from our country. There are so many people who have no appreciation of how much God
blesses this country. On the contrary, we have people living in the United States today
who do not believe that the United States is even in the top 10 of best countries to live in
(and they will readily point you to a website to substantiate their point of view).

The more people who believe in Jesus Christ and the more people who are growing to
spiritual maturity by the intake of Bible doctrine, the better off our country is going to be,
no matter who is president and no matter who controls Congress. Now, you may have a
difficult time believing this, as one political party is clearly establishment oriented and the
other party is as anti-establishment as a U.S. political party has ever been—but, the key
is not who is in charge, but Who is the God of our nation. This is the result of the spiritual
choices made by millions of people.

One of the reasons that we studied Herod the Great, is so that you could see that he made
an honest effort to serve the people that he ruled over. Near the end of his life, he was
clearly a vicious evil tyrant; but he was not like that all of his life. And, as the ruler of
Judæa, he did some great, positive things for the Jewish people. They obviously had little
appreciation for any of what he did. Yet, interestingly enough, when Herod was at his
worst, the Lord Jesus Christ was born, the greatest blessing to mankind in all of human history.

Because of what is happening in the United States, we have to be willing to look beyond our leaders and our political party and see God, Who is in all and over all. If our nation is due for some divine discipline, then, we as believers should not panic and think that it is the end of the world. It isn't. So far, the worst actual discipline that we have received as a nation has been a number of weather events. However, it is clear that there are many things on the horizon which potentially trouble the United States. There is a real possibility that the United States, 30 years from now, will be nothing like the God-blessed country that we enjoy today.

There is no question that our relationship to the Risen Christ is the source of our blessings.

Psalm 33:11–12  The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations.  Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom He has chosen as His heritage!

Psalm 144:15  Blessed are the people to whom such blessings fall! Blessed are the people whose God is the LORD!  (ESV; capitalized)

Now, it is apparent that many people are turning away from God; and the most churches do not appear to be dedicated to the teaching of Bible doctrine. Nevertheless, even if our nation was to enter the 3rd or 4th stage of national discipline, there is still no reason to panic. God is in control. If you are rightly related to God—a believer taking in Bible doctrine—then you have nothing to fear and nothing to get worked up about.

What is quite amazing to me is just how relevant our study is to our day and time. The Bible is like that; and an excellent teacher is able to bring this into our time.

I can listen to messages delivered by R. B. Thieme, Jr. from 40 years ago, and it sounds as if he is speaking of today when he begins to make application. J. Vernon McGee predates R. B. Thieme, Jr. by a decade or so, and he also taught from the Bible. In fact, McGee went through the entire Bible for his radio ministry (which show is still on the radio in some areas). Now and again, he might stop and make a few comments on the politicians of his day (McGee never named them specifically), and I have heard McGee make application using politics back in perhaps from the 1960's or the 1970's; yet, since he did not name these men, he sounds as up to date as anything you will hear spoken from the pulpit today. Both McGee and Thieme focused on the teaching of Scripture, which automatically made their topical messages pertinent and up to date.

We find it easy to get worked up over secular leaders, and there is nothing wrong with knowledge of the politics of your city, county, state or nation; and in a democracy, as voting for our preferred leaders is a great privilege. But we need to be careful of getting too worked up because, in our system of government, party control changes hands with some regularity.
Furthermore, we need to keep politics in perspective. During the time of the early church, most of the Roman emperors were viciously anti-Christian, to the point of jailing and executing believers who were too evangelical. Their acts and policies were so horrific, that there is no comparing them to whomever is in power right today as you read this, even if that leader is a fire-breathing socialist who wants the government to be in charge of everything. Despite the absolute evil of some Roman emperors, Christianity grew and thrived in the early centuries under the evangelism and teaching of the Apostles.

Throughout time, man is the same. We have a sin nature and we are motivated by our various lusts—power lust, materialism lust, sexual lust, approbation lust. This is true today just as much as it was true during the days of Luke’s biography of the Lord. And God is the same as well. His control of things and His systems of authority are also the same. So, even though we are studying things which took place 2000 years ago, which involve customs and practices very different from our own, we are still able to understand these things and relate to them.

At this point in our study, Zechariah has gone to the Temple to perform his priestly duties, when, suddenly, an angel appears to him. The angel speaks to Zechariah about a son that he will have with his wife. This son, known as John the baptizer or John the Herald, would be the herald to the King.

Luke 1:13–15  But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

As mentioned before, the appearance of an angel to this man is a very unusual event. The last time that we know that such a thing took place is 500 years previous. Zechariah is shaken up and fearful, but the angel calms him and tells him about the son that he will have (Zechariah and his wife are both old—too old to have children, in fact, if not for God).

Luke 1:16  And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God,...

The angel continues to prophesy to Zechariah concerning his future son, John. In the Age of Israel, (and, strictly speaking, we are in the Age of Israel in this passage), men learned from prophets and priests. Prophets represented God to man and priests represented man to God. Prophets spoke the Word of God; priests taught the written Word of God (and priests performed a number of rituals found in the writings of Moses).

In the Age of Israel, people were saved by believing in Jehovah Elohim, and enough of Him was revealed either in the teaching of the Old Testament, the words of the prophet, or through the animal sacrifices, for people to consider the Revealed God and believe in Him. However, John will be a herald of the Coming King, Christ Jesus, the Son of the Living God. Some people will believe in God and believe in His Son through of John’s ministry.
As we will later study, Judaism had become corrupt at this time, and people were no longer learning to believe in Jehovah Elohim from their priests. The corrupt priests at that time were teaching a different god; an extremely legalistic god.

Much of Israel was turned against their God and for several reasons: (1) they were being taught lies and falsehoods by their religious leaders; and (2) the people were discouraged because they were under the thumb of Rome, and this lack of independence angered and frustrated them (despite the fact that this had been going on for hundreds of years). (3) However, most importantly, so many of the people had their own, natural, negative volition. That is, much of Israel had rejected the God of grace, Who is clearly taught in the Old Testament.

People today who are anti-God think that faith can only be imposed on undiscriminating children; but there are children today brought up by Christian parents who reject this faith. Similarly, there were people in this time that we are studying, who were exposed to all of the worship of the Jews, but they were unable to recognize their Savior when He came on the scene. Or, when they heard His message, they rejected Him.

I learned a great many things from my pastor-teacher, R. B. Thieme, Jr. However, I have noticed that there are people out there, even today, posting their testimony how they do not believe that Bob was a good teacher, and they most often cite his personality, his authoritarianism and his love of the military as supporting evidence. What I have noticed, for the most part, is these are people who were brought up in Berachah Church as young people (they were originally brought by their parents when they were children). Some may have spent 10–20 years in Berachah Church, much of that as a young person. These people have rejected the careful and accurate teaching of R. B. Thieme, Jr. There are many basic concepts of Christianity which, I have observed in their writings, that they object to as well. This is what negative volition is. So, even though they were exposed to excellent teaching from a young and impressionable age, they rejected that teaching. They may think that the problem was Bob’s personality but it was the content of his teaching—accurate Bible doctrine—which they ultimately objected to. This is how many people react to accurate Biblical teaching. Negative volition is the underlying fundamental reason why so many people reject the truth.

Now, as an aside, this does not mean that a person who left Bob’s church to go under the ministry of Robert Dean or Joe Griffin (or anyone else who carefully teaches Bible doctrine) is expressing negative volition. Such people are simply gravitating naturally to their right pastor-teacher. That is a very different thing. I have heard both of these men teach, and they are outstanding teachers of the Word of God.

In this life, we live in a variety of circumstances. Yet God is in all and God is over all. Now, I might be the wrong person to say this, as God has given me great underserved grace in my life, being a baby boomer in the United States of America. My life has been greatly blessed. I had a wonderful childhood; and my life from my second birth to now has been wonderful. Like everyone else, I have faced difficulties and problems. However, with regards to almost every problem of my life, I have been the cause of that problem. So, I
can say these things, but recognizing that God has given me great blessings to enjoy; and I realize that many other people have so much more to contend with. In any case, the principle is the same. If you want happiness and blessings in this life, then pursue God and His truth; and all of those things will be added to you (which is one of the things that Jesus taught).

These sons of Israel have lived through some difficult times—but certainly nothing to compare to the Exodus generation. Their lives were not that bad; nor was the Roman government unbearable. The Roman empire provided law and order throughout the land, and allowed them religious liberty, stopping short at giving the Jews the ability to execute their criminals. Herod the Great provided the Jewish people with a wonderful Temple and with law and order in their land, so that the Hebrew people could easily travel from point A to point B without fearing for their lives (we will see many examples of this in the New Testament). For a people who traveled en masse to some of their religious services, this was a great blessing (one which they appeared to take for granted). All of this ultimately had to be overseen by a higher power. But, other than their lack of complete autonomy, this was not a bad time for the Jewish people, despite many of them thinking that it was.