

# The Gospel of Luke - Introduction

by Arno Clemens Gaebelein

---

*The Gospel of Luke presents a unique perspective on the life of Jesus Christ, focusing on His humanity and perfect Manhood.*

**Scripture:** Luke 1:1, Luke 2:1, Luke 6:12, Luke 15:11, Luke 23:39, Luke 24:13, Luke 24:50, Hebrews 5:1

**Topics:** "Jesus Christ", "Gospel Study"

---

## Description

Arno Clemens Gaebelein delves into the Gospel of Luke, highlighting its unique perspective on the life of Jesus as the perfect Man, emphasizing His humanity and moral perfections. The Gospel of Luke, written by the beloved physician Luke, showcases the tender sympathies of Jesus as the Savior of humanity, portraying Him in a way that reveals His true and perfect Manhood. Luke's Gospel includes exclusive events and circumstances not found in the other Gospels, shedding light on the ministry, prayers, and parables of Jesus, as well as His interactions with various individuals. Through a careful study of the Gospel of Luke, believers can gain a deeper understanding of Jesus' mission to seek and save the lost.

---

## Transcript

The Gospel of Luke is the third of the so-called Synoptics. The word synoptic means "seeing the whole together or at a glance." Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the synoptic Gospels, because they present a common narrative, relate the same incidents of our Lord, with much the same words, though characteristic differences, omissions, and additions are equally apparent. Various theories have been advanced to explain the similarity and differences, so often called discrepancies, of these three Gospels. One is the theory that originally there existed a primitive Gospel, which has been lost. Out of this primitive Gospel, it is claimed, the three Gospels were constructed. Another theory is that they grew out of one another; that one wrote first and the others followed to add to it and omit what they thought best to omit. It is beyond the scope of our Bible study work to take up these attempted explanations of how the Gospels came into existence. Nor can we follow in detail the intensely interesting historical evidences, which so wonderfully demonstrate their authenticity. However, we desire to say that the last word in the controversy of the Gospels and their genuineness has been spoken. The attacks upon the historicity of the narrative, the denials which have been made, have been silenced, though infidelity cannot completely be silenced, at least not in the present age.

The well-known scholar, Dr. Schaff, made the statement, "The essential identity, of the Christ of the Synoptics is now universally conceded." This is true. But the differences, the divergences in numerous

things of the story the Synoptic Gospels reveal, how are they to be explained? There can be but one answer. The three persons who have written were chosen by the Spirit of God to write the narrative in exactly the way in which they did. The characteristic differences of their work is not man-made, but God-breathed. They 'wrote independently of each other. They did not try to improve upon a record already in existence. The Holy Spirit guided the pen of each, so that we possess in these three Gospels the testimony of the Holy Spirit concerning the Lord Jesus in a threefold aspect. The proof of this will soon be found in the careful and prayerful study of the Gospels. The truth is not discovered by learning and research in linguistic or historical lines, but by earnest searching in the Word itself. The three Gospels make the humanity of the Lord Jesus prominent, but not to the exclusion of His Deity. The full revelation of His Deity is given in the fourth Gospel, the Gospel of John, but not excluding His true humanity. The Transfiguration is given by each of the Synoptics, but it is not found in the fourth Gospel. There is no room for it in the Gospel of John. Of the characteristic features of the Gospel of John and the contrast with the Synoptics, we have more to say in our introduction to that Gospel.

We have already seen that Matthew describes the Lord Jesus as the King and Mark pictures Him as the obedient servant, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many. The Gospel of Luke is the Gospel of His Manhood; we behold Him in this Gospel as the Son of Man. It has often been pointed out that the early church possessed these fundamental facts concerning the synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John and that knowledge may be traced in an outward form through centuries. It was Irenaeus who, as far as we know, called first the attention to the fourfold appearances of the Cherubim and the four Gospels. He declared that the four faces of the Cherubim are images of the activity of the Son of God. The Cherubim had the faces of the lion, the ox, the man, and the eagle. The application to the four Gospels of the four faces of the Cherubim has been maintained for many centuries as the true application. Ancient manuscripts, illuminated missals, etc., bear witness to it. The Lion, the kingly animal, represents Matthew's Gospel. Mark, the Gospel of the Servant, is represented by the Ox, the bur- den-bearing animal. In Luke we see the Face of a Man and the Eagle, sweeping the heavens, coming from above and returning there, represents Him, who came from the Father and has gone back to the Father.

We turn now our attention to the Gospel of Luke, the Gospel of Manhood.

### The Writer of the Third Gospel

The writer of the third Gospel does not mention his name, though he speaks of himself in the opening verses of the first chapter. The first verse in the Book of Acts makes known that the same writer who wrote the Book of Acts also wrote the third Gospel and that both mention the same person, who is addressed, that is Theophilus. Furthermore, we learn from Acts 1:1, that the third Gospel had been written, when the writer of Acts began his work. Inasmuch as Luke is undoubtedly the writer of the Book of Acts, he is also the penman of the third Gospel. "It has been generally and almost unanimously acknowledged that the Gospel, which we now possess is that written by Luke." (Dean Alford.)

Luke did not belong, as some hold, to the seventy our Lord sent forth to minister. His own words answer this statement. (Read Luke 1:2.) The Epistles give us the only reliable information about his person. In Colossians 4:14 we read of him as "the beloved physician." In the Epistle to Philemon he is called a fellow laborer of the Apostle Paul. From Second Timothy we learn that he was in Rome when Paul was a prisoner and remained faithful to him when others forsook the Apostle. He had also joined the Apostle during his second missionary journey at Troas (Acts 16:10). The evidence of it is found in the little word

"we." He went with Paul to Macedonia and remained sometime in Philippi. In Colossians, chapter 4 we find also the fact brought out that he was a Gentile. First Paul mentions those of the circumcision (Colossians 4:11). Then Epaphras, a Colossian Gentile, is mentioned, followed by the names of Luke and Demas, both undoubtedly Gentiles. He is therefore the only writer in the Bible who was a Gentile. The reason that he was selected to write the Gospel, which pictures the Lord Christ, as the perfect Man, and the Book of Acts is more than interesting. The Gospel of Luke, a Gentile, addressed to a gentile (Theophilus) is the Gospel for the Gentiles. And the same Gentile instrument was chosen to relate the history of the Gospel going forth from Jerusalem to the Gentiles. Other critical questions, such as the time it was written, where it was written, etc., we are obliged to pass by.

### The Characteristic Features Of The Gospel Of Luke

We have seen from the study of Matthew that our Lord is seen in it as the King and in Mark as the Servant. The Gospel of Luke has even more characteristic features which bring out the great purpose of the last Synoptic Gospel. The perfect Manhood of the Lord Jesus Christ, His moral perfections, His tender sympathies as the Saviour of man, are written here in a most precious way. The Priesthood the glorified Son of Man exercises now in behalf of His people, being touched with a feeling of our infirmities has for its foundation His true Manhood. "For every high priest taken from among men is appointed in behalf of men in things Godward, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; since he himself also is compassed with infirmity." (Hebrews 5:1-2). That He was the true and perfect Man, tempted in all points like as we are, apart from sin; holy, blameless, undefiled and separate from sinners, is fully seen in the Gospel of Luke.

A glance at the beginning of the Gospel of Luke reveals at once its object. Matthew's Gospel begins with a genealogy; the genealogy of the King and is followed by the account of the wise men coming to Jerusalem looking for the new born King of the Jews. Mark begins abruptly, one might say in a hurried way, as if the writer is anxious to introduce the untiring ministry of the perfect Servant at once. And so he does.

How different is the beginning of the third Gospel! It is perfectly human. A friend writes to a friend and when he begins to tell the story he starts also in a very human way, "There was in the days of Herod the King." The two opening chapters are peculiar to Luke. All is new. We do not find anywhere else the details of John's birth, Gabriel's visit to Mary and the announcement of the coming birth of Christ, and the beautiful outbursts of praise of the two women and Zacharias.

The Gospel, which is to reveal "the face of a Man" had to give these blessed facts. The second chapter, containing the most beautiful description of the birth of our Lord; bringing out the facts that He entered the world, whose Creator He is, like every other son of man, born of a woman, no room in the inn, his first resting place a manger, known to Matthew, Mark and John, were omitted by them. Luke, chosen to describe the perfect Man, had to embody these blessed details in his narrative.

The babe, the child growing, the twelve year old boy in the temple, His increase in wisdom and stature, in favor with God and man, all related in the second chapter of Luke show Him forth in His true humanity. The authenticity of these two chapters has often been doubted. There can be no valid reason for it; on the contrary their genuineness are as completely proven as the rest of the Gospel. Another beautiful feature of this Gospel is that Luke speaks more of the prayers of our Lord than the others.

Prayer is the expression of human dependence upon God. Inasmuch as the Son of God had taken the Creator's (creature's?) place, He prayed and was cast upon God. Being baptized "and praying" heaven

was opened. (Luke 3:21.) Before He called the twelve Apostles He continued all night in prayer (6:12-13). "As He was praying" He asked the disciples, "Whom say the people that I am," (9:18). According to Luke He was transfigured "as He was praying." He also said to Peter "I have prayed for thee."

All this is peculiar to this Gospel and is needed to bring out His true humanity. When Luke speaks of Him more than the other evangelists, that "He sat down to eat meat" we have the picture of a true man among men. And what more do we find in the Gospel of the beloved physician, which brings out His tender human sympathy. The story of the raising up of the widow's son at Nain is alive with tenderness and sympathy. Then there are the parables peculiar to Luke. The parable of the lost coin, the prodigal son, the parable of the importunate friend, the unjust steward, the good Samaritan, the Pharisee and the Publican praying in the temple and others are reported only by Luke.

In this Gospel only we have the record of the story of the rich man and Lazarus, their life on earth, their death and their state after death; the conversion of Zacchaeus; the dying thief and his salvation; the walk to Emmaus and other incidents. How fitting that Luke, the Gentile, should also tell us what the others were not commissioned to write in reporting the prophetic utterances of our Lord, that Jerusalem should be trodden down by the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

All these characteristic features and many others, such as the genealogy in chapter 3, His ministry as reported by Luke, the description of His suffering, His death, and His resurrection are pointed out in the annotations. May it please the Holy Spirit to give us through the study of this Gospel a new vision of Him who was rich and who became poor for our sakes, that we through His poverty might be rich.

#### Events and Principal Circumstances Reported Exclusively by Luke

It will be of much help to the student of the Gospels to possess a list of events and a number of circumstances, which are not reported by Matthew, Mark and John, but only by Luke. These interesting peculiarities of the third Gospel shed much light upon the Gospel itself. We give the list of fifty-eight items by chapter and verse.

1.--The vision of Zacharias, and conception of Elisabeth 1:5-25.

2.--The salutation of the Virgin Mary 1:26-38

3.--Mary's visit to Elisabeth 1:39-56

4.--The birth of John the Baptist, and hymn of Zacharias 1:57-80.

5.--The decree of Caesar Augustus 2:1-3

6.--The birth of Christ at Bethlehem 2:4-7

7.--The appearance of angels to the shepherds 2:8-20

8.--The circumcision of Christ 2:21

9.--The presentation of Christ in the temple 2:22-24

10.--The account of Simeon and Anna 2:25-38

11.--Christ found among the doctors 2:41-52.

- 12.--Date of beginning of John's ministry 3:1-2.
- 13.--Success of John's ministry 3:10-15.
- 14.--Genealogy of Mary 3:23-38
- 15.--Christ preaching and rejected at Nazareth 4:15-30
- 16.--Particulars in the call of Simon, James and John 5:1-10
- 17.--Christ's discourse in the plain 6:17-49
- 18.--Raising of the widow's son at Nain 7:11-17
- 19.--Woman in Simon's house 7:36-50
- 20.--Women who ministered to Christ 8:1-3
- 21.--James and John desiring fire to come down 9:51-56
- 22.--Mission of seventy disciples 10:1-16
- 23.--Return of seventy disciples 10:17-24
- 24.--Parable of the good Samaritan 10:25-37
- 25.--Christ in the house of Martha and Mary 10:38-42
- 26.--Parable of friend at midnight 11:5-8
- 27.--Christ in a Pharisee's house 11:37-54.
- 28.--Discourse to an innumerable multitude 12:1-53
- 29.--Murder of the Galileans 13:1-5
- 30.--Parable of the barren fig tree 13:6-9
- 31.--Case of the woman diseased 18 years 13:10-20
- 32.--Question on the few that be saved 13:22-30
- 33.--Reply to the Pharisees' warning about Herod 13:31-33
- 34.--Case of a dropsical man 14:1-6
- 35.--Parable of the lowest room 14:7-14
- 36.--Parable of the great supper 14:15-24
- 37.--Difficulties of Christ's service 14:25-35
- 38.--Parable of the lost sheep and piece of money 15:1-10

- 39.--Parable of the prodigal son 15:11-22
- 40.--Parable of the unjust steward 16:1-18
- 41.--The rich man and Lazarus 16:19-31
- 42.--Instruction to disciples 17:1-10
- 43.--Healing of ten lepers 17:12-19
- 44.--Question and answer about the coming of God's kingdom 17:20-37
- 45.--Parable of the importunate widow 18:1-8
- 46.--Parable of the Pharisee and Publican 18:9-14
- 47.--Calling of Zacchaeus 19:2-10
- 48.--Parable of the pounds 19:11-28
- 49.--Christ weeping over Jerusalem 19:41-44
- 50.--Special warning to Peter 22:31-32
- 51.--Direction to buy sword 22:35-38
- 52.--Appearance of an angel, and bloody sweat in garden 22:43-44
- 53.--Pilate sends Christ to Herod 23:6-16
- 54.--Women deplore Christ's sufferings 23:27-32
- 55.--The penitent thief 23:39-43
- 56.--The appearance of Christ to two disciples going to Emmaus 24:13-35
- 57.--Circumstances attending Christ's appearance to the eleven 24:37-49
- 58.--Christ's departure in the act of blessing 24:50-53.

#### The Division of the Gospel of Luke

As already stated, the Gospel of Luke in its beginning gives the birth and childhood of our Lord; then reveals His perfect Manhood, ministering, suffering and dying as the Saviour of men. The last chapter reveals the second Man in His resurrection glory and His ascension. All is cast in such a way as to bring out His true and perfect humanity. The best verse to quote as key for this Gospel is found in the nineteenth chapter: "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (19:10). Various divisions have been made. Seven great parts, however, are clearly marked.

I. The Birth and Childhood. Chapter 1-2:52.

II. The Beginnings of His Ministry. Chapter 3-4:13.

III. The Ministry in Galilee. Chapter 4:14-9:50.

IV. The Journey to Jerusalem. Chapter 9:51-19:27.

V. In Jerusalem. Chapter 19:28-21:38. VI. His Rejection, Suffering and Death. Chapter 22-23.

VII. His Resurrection and Ascension. Chapter 24.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/arno-clemens-gaebelein-/the-gospel-of-luke-introduction/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**