

Luke

Bible Study Outline

Focus

The purpose of our study of the gospel of Luke is to focus our eyes on Jesus, believing that as we learn more of Him, we are able to walk with Him more intimately. That being said, we acknowledge that gospels have a particular challenge in teaching because of their length, and the somewhat “jumpy” nature of first century narratives. In order to do our best to cover the basic flow of the narrative and the essential content of the various accounts within it, we will take a hybrid approach to how we move through it. By “hybrid”, we mean that we will do our best to blend the narrative/timeline considerations with the broader thematic topics that Jesus periodically addresses throughout the narrative timeline.

As we study through the gospel of Luke, we also want to pay particular attention to two topics of interest along the way: 1) The personal journey of Jesus as He embraced His role as the Savior to the whole world, and 2) The discipleship model of engaging the mission of the Father that Jesus demonstrated. These will be regular observations that we will consider as we study each individual story, desiring to learn and apply these principles to our lives and ministry.

As you look more closely at the breakdown of the individual teachings, you will notice that we chosen to look at the teachings in 4 different sections that better help us understand the flow of the book from a narrative perspective. Each section does have some unique qualities, which we will take notice of as we move through the book. Some of the sections are more linear in terms of the locations and purposes of the movement of Jesus, while others cover more of the topics/teachings of Jesus rather than the precise locations and movements of Jesus. We will do our best to accurately teach each one of these sections with their particular focus in mind.

Outline

Section 1 - Introduction

Teaching 1

Topic: Prepare the Way
Passages: Luke 1:1-25, 57-80

Teaching 2

Topic: The Savior Prophesied
Passages: Luke 1:26-55

Teaching 3

Topic: The Savior Is Born
Passages: Luke 2

Section 2 - Ministry In Galilee

Teaching 4

Topic: John's Preparation
Passages: Luke 3

Teaching 5

Topic: Jesus' Mission Defined
Passages: Luke 4

Teaching 6

Topic: Jesus' Mission Begins
Passages: Luke 5

Teaching 7

Topic: Kingdom Of Love
Passages: Luke 6

Teaching 8

Topic: Opposition To Jesus

Passages: Luke 7:1-9:17

Teaching 9

Topic: Mystery Revealed

Passages: Luke 9:18-50

Section 3 - The Journey To Jerusalem

Teaching 10

Topic: The Cost of Following

Passages: Luke 9:51-10:24, 14:25-34

Teaching 11

Topic: Prayer

Passages: Luke 11:1-13

Teaching 11

Topic: Spiritual Opposition

Passages: Luke 11:14-26, 37-53, 14:1-24, 15:11-32

Teaching 12

Topic: Wealth and Possessions

Passages: Luke 12:13-31, 16, 18:18-30

Teaching 13

Topic: Jesus Mission Affirmed

Passages: Luke 18:15-17, 35-43, 19:1-10

Section 4 - The Cross And Commission

Teaching 14

Topic: Preparation For Death

Passages: Luke 19:28-22:71

Teaching 15

Topic: Death, Burial, And Resurrection

Passages: Luke 23:1-24:12

Teaching 16

Topic: The Missional Model

Passages: Luke 24:13-53

Theology

As we look at the gospel of Luke, we find that there are a number of challenges that we are posed with in studying a gospel. Much of these challenges come due to two primary reasons: the transitional nature of the ministry of Jesus from the old covenant to the new covenant, and the particular way that first century teachers communicated to their audiences.

The ministry of Jesus took place at the convergence of the close of God's specific plan to use Israel as his missional people and his introduction of the Church as the new "people of God" for his mission. This provides some very interesting interpretive challenges as we navigate the teachings of Jesus at any particular point in time. We have to understand each passage according to this transition; understanding that Jesus will often be speaking to "old covenant" Israel, under the Law, and still functioning as God's people, while at other times he is speaking toward a reality of the coming Kingdom which will directly be affected by the work of the upcoming Church. To complicate this even a bit more, this upcoming Church was a mystery to the old covenant community of Israel and also to Satan and his demons. This is why, at times, Jesus spoke with a level of secrecy to his disciples about the meaning of some of his teachings.

Another challenge to keep in mind as we study the Gospel of Luke is to note that style of teaching that was used by Jesus. This can be particularly challenging to us as Western thinkers because our logic and instructional patterns are different when compared with first century Hebrew thought and teaching. Much of the process by which people were taught in Hebrew culture was specifically built around the virtue of creating environments and contexts for the students to think for themselves. Much of the approach of first century Hebrew Rabbis was specifically geared toward parables and challenging regular thinking/norms so that the students would have to think the issues through for themselves. Reasoning with, and at times against, the regularly held views was intentional because it is provided an environment for their students to grapple with and more personally embrace the content of discussion. This is all "in play" as Jesus teaches the masses, His disciples, and ultimately us as well.

Luke 12:51 | Did Jesus Come To Bring Division?

This passage comes at key point in the ministry of Jesus, one in which He is moving to Jerusalem and the events of the cross. This path of Jesus is meant to be seen as a story of His own journey, but also as a picture of what our journey in discipleship will look like. For us, two very important issues collide in this story, individual will and discipleship principles.

On one hand, Jesus makes it very clear that His offer of discipleship is specifically contingent on the individuals choice to follow Him or not. If an individual chooses to follow Jesus, conflict will come and division will arise because other people will not choose to follow Jesus. Because of the nature of each individual person's will, families and other relationships will always be affected when someone chooses to follow Jesus as a disciple. This is the reality of the offer of discipleship.

On the other hand, discipleship principles are also squarely in view in this passage. To be a disciple is an individual choice that each person must make. One cannot misunderstand that choice as an easy one either. Intrinsic to the decision to follow Jesus is the reality of leaving something behind. The most difficult repercussion of discipleship is the negative effects that it can have on relationships with those we love.

So Jesus is not communicating an evil intent to destroy families, but He is pointing to the reality of His ministry to redeem and restore people. He did not come to coddle people, but to redeem them to the Father. He did not come to galvanize families who living in unbelief. Jesus came to redeem and restore and when - because of individual choices - some reject Him, He will still call others to follow Him against the desires and choices of others who reject Him.

Luke 14:26 | Should We Hate Our Parents?

This passage is also to be understood the broader discipleship call that this passage finds itself in. Much like the previously mentioned passage, we are to understand Jesus' words in His ultimate aim of redeeming and restoring people to the God. In a simple sense, the point of what Jesus is saying is that He desires for all people to make the best, albeit difficult at times, decision which is to follow Him completely. That is his aim.

The particular challenge of this passage though is in the word "hate" and there are two ways that we can understand this usage by Jesus. One is that people are to actually hate their parents by choosing to follow Jesus. This is particularly problematic to the Jesus who said that He came to fulfill the Law and not destroy it. How could he command people to break the Law then? He could not.

The other option is that Jesus is communicating that following Him exclusively will lead you to do things that will be considered hateful. In a Middle Eastern culture that was so influenced by corporate and community identity through family relationships, the idea of rejecting some of those deep cultural expectations would certainly bring some to accuse a Jesus follower as being hateful toward his/her family. In this sense, Jesus is most certainly saying that people must choose Jesus over every other relationship, over every cultural expectation. Of course we know that doing so, Jesus would never lead anyone to disrespect and shame his/her family, but that isn't the point. The point is summed up in this question, "Which relationship will hold ultimate authority over you?"

Luke 16:1-17 | Justification or Sanctification?

This passage has a unique challenge in that it includes the word “justify” in a passage that is talking about sanctification and discipleship. As we follow the passage simply, we understand that Jesus is teaching about discipleship and following Him. Ultimately it is a parable about the stewardship of our lives and resources with eternity in focus. The challenge comes when the Pharisees enter the scene and Jesus begins to address them and uses the word “justify”.

In this way, although the context is a discipleship/sanctification passage with relationship to money, Jesus points out that the Pharisees chose to “justify” themselves before people through money. So to understand this clearly, Jesus was not saying that the Pharisees were justified before God by money, but before men. In this way, they were grossly misusing and misrepresenting money to people, seeking to be justified in the eyes of people by their so called “generous hearts”, and all the while they were not realizing that they will not ultimately be judged by mankind with relationship to money, but by God Himself.

So this passage refers to discipleship and sanctification in the area of money, not in salvation or justification.

Luke 22:35-38 | Should Christians Protect Themselves?

This is a hot button issue for some, but the passage does briefly reference the issue of self protection as followers of Jesus. It does give a contextual defense of that ideal and it certainly provides an occurrence of a positive view of self protection. An important thing to note however is the brevity of the passage and the simple fact that the context that we find it in is not one where Jesus is teaching comprehensively on the topic. In other words, to fully address this issue, we should look at other contexts that deal with relevant issues connected to self protection, sacrificial love, etc.

Application

As is the case with all of our studies, we desire to be taught by the Bible, with the intended contextual application that we discover when we study it. At times, we choose to maintain an “overall” applicational thrust to the study of a particular book of the Bible which we feel might be particularly helpful. In Luke, we do not see any particular applicational objective other than the expressed desire of the author, Luke, which was to give an accurate account of who Jesus was to the secular world. In contrast to Matthew which has a very “Hebrew” focus, Luke is most commonly understood as a legal, and if we can say “secular”, description of Jesus that would assist Paul’s legal counsel while he was imprisoned in Rome. If any gospel would have particular appeal to our culture, this would be it.

With this framework in mind, we desire to simply look at this account of Jesus for the pursuing of knowing Jesus. We want to answer the question, “Who is this Jesus?”. If we approach this gospel with this simple of an applicational aim, we will surely come to know Jesus better, understand how he lived, what he lived for, and then how this should affect us as we live “in Him”.