

# Introduction to the Gospel According to Luke

## Luke 1

**Genre** - While your bible is One Story ultimately by One Author - God used 40 different human authors over the period of 1,600 years, writing in three different languages (Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic). Those human authors employed a wide variety of literary genres.

The word Genre is a French word meaning, “kind” or “sort” - it refers to the category of literature. One of the great mistakes people make when reading the bible is not allowing the mental shift necessary to move in and out of the different GENRES represented.

We are accustomed to doing this in modern writings. For example when you read the newspaper you make a mental shift when you move from an editorial, into the comics, then again as you read the sports section, yet again when you read the classifieds. Each is uniquely written and each assumes the reader knows something about its genre.

But when people read the Bible they often fail to realize it is a similar compilation. That's why when they start reading the bible they love it until about Leviticus...

- Genesis - Historical Narrative with occasional poetry.
- Exodus - Historical Narrative with occasional poetry.
- Leviticus - Legal Discourse, it is to be read and understood differently.

**In the Bible we find** - Historical narrative, Legal Discourse, Wisdom Literature, Poetry, Prophetic Literature, Apocalyptic Literature, Epistles (letters), and Gospel. You have to read each book according to the rules of genre to get the most out of the writing.

Luke - is a Gospel account. How is that different from a Historical Narrative? Well basically a Gospel is History told in such a way to emphasize a theological point.

In the Bible we have Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Notice in most bibles they will be entitled, “the Gospel according to..”. In other words, there is ONE Gospel, but there are 4 different vantage points.

Each of the 4 Gospels is written for a unique audience, and each one emphasizes a particular aspect of the person and work of Jesus.

- **Matthew** - written for a Jewish audience. So he references the Mosaic law and rabbinic traditions they would be most familiar with.
- **Mark** - written for a Roman audience -
- **Luke** - written for a Greek audience. The Greeks were highly educated. They were looking for the perfect man - so Luke emphasizes the humanity of Jesus.

Mat. Mar. Luk. Have over 75% of the content in common. They are considered Synoptic Gospels.

- **John** - was the final gospel written and he mostly covers events that aren't written about in the Synoptics. His is the everyman Gospel.

**Authorship** - I, as well as the vast majority of Church history, holds that Luke the beloved Physician is the author of this Gospel as well as the book of Acts.

Luke was a Gentile convert to Christianity and Doctor as well as a Historian. In the original Greek Luke has a wealth of medical terminology in fact more than in the writings of Hypocrates himself.

**Recipient** - The Audience was a man referred to as, "Most excellent Theophilus" a man with THE AWFULLEST name in the Bible.

I tend to believe that Theophilus was a real person, likely a man of high social standing who had been influenced by the Gospel and wanted to have trustworthy research done into the claims of Christianity. Thus, he hires Luke as his researcher, and the Gospel of Luke becomes that delivered final report.

**PATRON** - BTW, those of you who have achieved much by worldly standards, don't underestimate the way you can invest to help Christian ministries, "level-up". Consider identifying a work that you believe in and investing significantly to that end.

***NOW - Let's talk about the CONTEXT that existed when the Gospel According to Luke was written.***

## 1. The Political Context

There were 6 changes in government in the land of Israel during the Intertestamental period.

### a. Persian Rule - (536 BC - 333 BC)

The Persians were the dominant world power at the close of the OT and they were in power about 60 years into the Intertestamental Period.

The Persians had a different approach than the Babylonians. Remember the Babylonians took the best and the brightest into captivity and tried to change them into good Babylonians. That left the motherland of Israel destitute of leadership and unproductive. The Persians, had a different approach. They would leave the leaders in the land and give them enough freedom to generate wealth and pay tribute back to the Persian government. That is why you see the returning to the land of Ezra and

Nehemiah, and the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem. (Prophesied in Isaiah 45)

### b. Greek Empire

Zechariah 9 foretold that the Greeks would conquer the land 200 years before the birth of Alexander the Great.

Alexander the Great, brought his armies to Israel but he didn't decimate the land as was his policy. History tells us that he had a dream. In the dream he was warned not to destroy the land. History tells us that Yeduah the High Priest came out to meet Alexander and showed him **Daniel 7** how scripture foretold his coming and what would come after him.



Alexander the Great

Alexander gave orders that Jerusalem not be touched, and he went around it as Zechariah 9 promised.

### c. The Greco Egyptian Period

- Ptolemaic Egypt
- Seleucid of Syria
- Attalid Anatolia
- Antigonid Macedon

The Ptolemys (Egypt) and the Seleucids (Syria) began a long battle in what was called the Syro-Egyptian wars.

Right in the middle was the land of Israel. The Egyptians won the land and the Greeks of Egypt wanted to Grecophy the culture, so they called together 70 scholars and translated the OT into Greek, giving us what is called the Septuagint.

NOW, this is important because when you see the OT quoted in the NT it is from this translation that is quoted.

### d. The Greco Syrian Period

An Greco Egyptian ruler who oversaw Israel died and his son stepped into his role, the son was 15 years of age.

Up north A Seleucid ruler name Antiochus the Great saw an opportunity to conquer and thus waged war and won.

A descendant of Antiochus the Great came to power after him in 175BC, his name was **Antiochus Epiphanes**, which means the coming of the glorious one. The Jews called him Antiochus Epimenes, which means the coming of the mad man (prophesied in Daniel 7 and 8)



Coinage of Antiochos IV

He brought about a 7 year reign of terror. He did not want Israel to be a vassal state, he wanted them to be fully Greek.

He made it illegal to worship the God of Israel, Jewish boys had to exercise in the nude like greek children. He required the uncircumcizing of jewish me... don't ask me how that worked, but he did.

While Antiochus Epiphanes was waging war in the South, a rumor spread that he was defeated. Israel removed the token priest he had installed in Jerusalem. It turned out he wasn't defeated, he came back found the rebellion.

He instituted what is called the Abomination of Desolation - he killed many jews, went into the Holy Place and sacrificed a pig and sprinkled the blood over the temple. He put a statute of a Greek god in the Holy of Holies and commanded Israel to worship or die.

### e. Maccabean Revolution

Zechariah 10 tells us what would happen.

Soldiers went up into the various villages and ordered the Jews to worship this Idol. They entered a particular village called Modlin and order the people to worship the idol. An elder of the city named Mathias refused to do it, they threatened to kill him. A younger priest inverted and said, "no need to shed blood, let's just bow" and he started to bow to this idol. Mathias drew his sword and killed the jewish priest and on the back swing he hit one of the Greek soldiers. A fight ensued and the Jews of Modlin won.

Under Mathias and his son Judas "the Hammer" Maccabee, the Jews drove out the Greeks and established again the state of Israel.



Mattathias slaying the Jewish apostate, painting by Philippe De Louthembourg

When they dedicated the temple to Yaweh and the celebrate that rededication annually with the feast of lights, called Hanukkah.

This began a glorious period of Jewish history. But the subsequent Kings led poorly and the government disintegrated.

Meanwhile, ROME was arising as a dominant world power, An EDOMITE name Antipater made a deal with Rome that made him governor over Jerusalem.

Antipater had a son, named Herod.

Herod was made the tetrarch of Israel, King of the Jews in 40BC. He married into the Hasmonean Dynasty, and worked a deal with Rome, then he proceed to kill the other claimants to the throne.

*That is the Political Context, now lets look at the...*

## 2. The Social Context

### a. Herod's Period of Expansion

- Herod begins to rebuild the temple over 46 years.
- Great cities are built, an aqueduct is built.
- But Herod isn't really a Jew and he is hated by the people.

Herod kills his wife, his mother in law, his two sons...  
A roman said, "it's better to be Herod's pig than his son".

So you see why he responded as he did as the wise men entered Jerusalem seeking the one born King of the Jews. Thus the slaughter of the innocents...

### b. Samaritan Culture

Now the very first convert to Jesus Christ was a Samaritan woman. The only people in the NT who called Jesus, Savior of the World were the Samaritans. James and John asked if they should call fire down on Samaria because they didn't give the disciples hospitality. Where did they come from?

When the Northern Kingdom was destroyed by the Assyrians, Assyria sent in Assyrian men to settle and marry the poor Jewish women of the land who remained. The result was the Samaritan people.



Model of Herod's Temple

They refused to worship at Jerusalem. They built an altar at Mt Geraseeln, there in Samaria. They only received as scripture Genesis - Deuteronomy. They had their own priesthood, their own law, their own place of worship.

Jews, would bypass Samaria traveling north to south. If he had to pass through Samaria, he would take off his sandals and shake the dust off of his feet.

### c. Multi Lingual Culture

By this time the spoken Hebrew language was more or less extinct, Aramaic had replaced it. It is likely that the Jews of Jesus day spoke multiple languages, but mostly Aramaic and Greek. Jesus likely spoke 3-4 languages.



Aramaic Etching

## 3. The Religious Context

Now the two most important aspects of Jewish worship in the OT were TEMPLE and TORAH. During the exile, the temple was destroyed, thus Torah became the center of worship.

### a. The Silence of the Prophets

For the 400 years between Malachi and the NT, there is no authoritative Prophetic utterance. That is for 400 years God didn't speak to the people.

That is why the emergence of John the Baptist was such an important thing.... God was finally speaking. What was God saying? Behold the Lamb of God..

### b. The Normality of the Synagogue System

A form of worship emerged that focused on the study of the Torah, known as synagogue worship. A synagogue could be established when 10 Jewish men were present.

Now there was nothing in scripture that called for or required a synagogue form of worship. It was just a means they developed to worship without a temple.

The central act of synagogue worship was not the altar and the sacrifice, but rather the reading of the scriptures and preaching. Now keep in mind, you don't see normalized preaching in the OT.



1st century Synagogue of Capernaum



The officers of a Synagogue included Elders and Deacons, a lead Rabbi and his staff of Rabbi's. Does that sound familiar? It's basically the prototype of the local church.

When Jesus said, "go into all the world and make disciples" what did his follower do? They stated congregations called Churches based on the synagogue system they were familiar with.

### **c. The Rise of the Pharisees**

Fidelity to the Torah became of utmost importance. A group men emerged who were passionate about the study of Torah and returning Israel to adherence to the Torah. These men were called the Pharisees. They were good guys. They believed that the could ensure and expedite the coming of Messiah by calling Jews to faithfulness to Torah.

Now the aristocracy had a group of religious experts who were the liberals of the day, known as the Sadducees.

### **d. The Drift of Judaism**

During this time, it became important to nail down the meaning of the various texts so that a uniformity of worship would exist in the various synagogues.

So an oral tradition was codified by SCRIBES into what is known as the Mishna. It was basically a commentary on the OT scriptures.

But, over time, adherence to the MISHNA, began to replace fidelity to the TORAH. That's very important. Because TORAH was inspired of God, MISHNA was some guys take on it.

Thus, when Jesus arrives he teaches, "You have heard it said, but I tell you".

Things like the proper washing of hands that was so important to the Pharisees, was not found in the TORAH it was in the MISHNA.

So the teaching of men, began to replace the word of God.

Jesus never ever quoted the Mishna.

### **e. The Sanhedrin**

Enforcement of the Mishna was carried out

Made up of:

- 1 high priest
- 24 chief priest
- 24 elders of the laity

- 24 scribes

One of their name tasks were to ID the messiah. There were 60 who claimed to be Messiah during this time. If one claimed to be the Messiah he must stand before the Sanhedrin.

**CONCLUSION/INVITATION:**