



# CATHOLIC SCRIPTURE STUDY

Catholic Scripture Study Notes written by Sister Marie Therese, are provided for the personal use of students during their active participation and must not be loaned or given to others.

## SERIES I

### THE GOSPEL OF LUKE AND ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Lesson 2 Commentary Luke  
Lesson 3 Questions Luke 1

### THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS Luke

#### I. INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPELS

##### A. The World Situation at Jesus' Time.

One Empire, the Roman, controlled the countries around the Mediterranean Sea (most of Europe), and some of Africa.

Palestine, the land of the Jewish people, extended about 150 miles long, and 30-50 miles wide. It was a country smaller than the state of Massachusetts. It was governed by Roman officials and under Roman laws, but it was also under another Law—the Law of God, coming from the revelation of Himself to Abraham and his descendants—the Israelites. This law was taught and enforced by the Sanhedrin, composed of the priests, the scholars (the scribes), and the Jewish leaders—Pharisees and Sadducees.

**B. The God-Man** (the event that the Gospels proclaim)

Reflection: If a God of infinite power and concern for His people were to become man within this situation, how would He come?

- as a Roman, exercising authority?
- as a rebel against the Romans?

- as a Jewish authority figure, a Pharisee or Sadducee?

No, Jesus came humbly, and began a ministry primarily to the needy, the powerless. He:

- fed the hungry
- forgave sinners
- healed the sick and the tormented
- was a friend to the poor and the outcast, the blind, the lame, the paralyzed, tax collectors and prostitutes.

The death of Jesus was highly predictable, under the circumstances; supernaturally, it was the main event of our salvation.

The Resurrection of Jesus was unpredictable and unbelieved by many; the Father's gift of Jesus was irrevocable and definitive.

**C. The REMEMBRANCE of Jesus:**  
ORAL TRADITION, beginning after Pentecost.

The Apostles are taught, visited by Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit of power and wisdom.

They preach the kerygma (the good news): the Name, the works, and the death and resurrection

of Jesus. They announce God's saving love for all. Their intention was to arouse faith and to bring others who believed to baptism in the Name of the Lord Jesus.

They formed faith communities (Acts 2:42). These met for the "breaking of the bread" (the ceremony of Jesus at the Last Supper and commanded by Him to be done by the Apostles) for the word of God as preached and taught by the Apostles, and for the life shared in a united group.

These communities reflected upon Him in the context of their own need as converted Jews, and as their promised Messiah; or by Gentiles as the Lord of Life. Some became aware of His likeness to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah who would take on the sin of His people and die for them; who would redeem Israel and bring salvation to the ends of the earth, who would bring good news to the poor, bind broken hearts, proclaim liberty to captives, freedom to those in prisons, and comfort to those who mourn.

Some recognized the innocent One of Psalm 22 "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

As these communities lived and reflected upon the gospel, in community and in worship, they were guided by the Holy Spirit. The person and the promises, the teachings and the deeds of the risen Lord took on greater clarity and focus. This oral preaching and passing on of traditions, was preached in segments, gradually.

**D. The Writing of the Gospels.** With the death of Peter about 65 A.D. there was need for a more stabilized and orderly account. It was not to be a biography in our sense of the word nor a mere chronicle of events. It was an account of a meditated-upon faith, the revelation of a person to be known, to those who had not known Him. It was an account based on strong historical traditions, put down as a permanent record and containing the Good News of the Christ, the Messiah,

as the Church had come to know it—in its witness and experience, in its preaching and teaching, in its meditation, prayer, and contemplation all in the light of the Holy Spirit.

And so, about 60 years into the Christian era (now called by historians the Common Era), 60 years after Jesus came into the world, Mark, a Greek-speaking Jewish Christian among Gentile converts, wrote a short Gospel (godspel, old English for Good news), which, it is thought, he had learned from the preaching of Peter.

About 70 A.D. a Jewish Christian addressing his fellows, uses Mark's Gospel and a collection of Jesus' sayings, and possibly an Aramaic account by the apostle Matthew, at least traditionally thought to be Matthew's preaching, and writes the Gospel of Matthew.

Sometime later, Luke, a Gentile convert of Paul's wrote a gospel, using the two gospels of Matthew and Mark and the "sayings" of Jesus, plus the Apostle Paul's preaching of Jesus (for Paul had been taught by Jesus Himself). He also wrote a second book, the Acts of the Apostles.

Finally, about 90 A.D., John, thought to be the Apostle John by many scholars even today, but surely a gifted and reflective theologian, wrote his Gospel on the divine nature of Jesus.

The first three Gospels are called the Synoptics because they are much the same account when placed in three columns. All these are considered by the Church to be authentic Tradition, the faith of the writers speaking to the faith of the believers.

## II. INTRODUCTION TO LUKE

The author gives an orderly account as an "evangelist" ("good news" in Greek) by presenting the good news of the preaching and deeds of Jesus. Luke is a man of his own time reflecting on the important message for his own time.

### A. Luke's Sense of Time

The period of Israel: all that went before and prepared the way for Jesus.

The period of Jesus' earthly life: God's saving intervention in which Jesus brings salvation, fulfills the promises, introduces God's Kingdom.

The period of the Church: all that follows the Ascension of Jesus, part of God's same plan, which is progressively realized through time and place until it is totally fulfilled in the Second Coming.

**B. Luke's Purpose in His Gospel** and Acts of the Apostles: to show the progress of the Good News as it spread from Jerusalem to Rome (then the capital of the world). Luke shows that, right from the beginning Jesus is recognized as a light to the non-Jewish world, the "peoples" everywhere—Gentiles. And at the end—the salvation sent by God (Luke 2:32, Acts 28:28).

### C. The Themes of Luke

Luke's focus: Jerusalem, the City of God. Luke introduces the Infancy by the presentation in the Temple. The long central section of his gospel is also a journey towards Jerusalem, and ends there.

Writing for the Gentile Church, Luke stresses salvation for all: "universal." The word used in the Greek original is "katolika," translated as "catholic." It became the name of Jesus' Church.

Luke tells these mentions of all mankind:

- the angel's song: peace on earth to all of good will
- Simeon speaks of a light of revelation to the Gentiles
- John the Baptist quotes Isaiah, all people shall see his salvation

- The Good Samaritan parable of Jesus is given, the only time in the Gospels.
- Jews are warned of being replaced by people of every land in the Messianic feast.
- the last command of Jesus: preach the gospel to all nations.

Luke stresses Jesus' role as Savior: compassionate, tender, forgiving.

- to you is born a savior.
- Jesus—"Yahweh saves"
- parables of lost sheep, lost coin, lost son
- anger against "blind guides"
- Jesus sought all, even Pharisees, and the Prodigal Son's older brother.
- story of the woman who is a sinner: "her great love..." (Luke 7:46-50)
- "This day you shall be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:29-43) to the good thief
- "Father, forgive them..." (Luke 23:34)
- the look that moved Peter (Luke 22:60-61)

Special attention is given to women, whose place in the ancient world was belittled.

- Elizabeth, Anna, the widow of Nain, the repentant sinner, the women of Galilee, the woman who declared his mother blessed, the women who met Jesus on His way to Calvary.
- parables of lost coin and unjust judge.
- Our Lady: in infancy narrative, especially her Magnificat.

Concerned for distressed, poor, humble

- came to seek and save the lost
- it is written that Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead; that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in His name to all nations

Luke sees Jesus as the bearer of the Holy Spirit:

- the Spirit overshadowed Mary at His conception
- the Spirit led Him out to the desert (after descending upon Him at Baptism)

- in the power of the Holy Spirit He returns to Galilee
- His first words in His public life: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me”
- Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit (Luke 10:21) for revealing Him to the unworldly
- the Holy Spirit is the gift of the risen and ascended Lord
- the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is for all who believe in the name of Christ
- the Spirit is poured out upon the Church (Acts 1 and 2)
- in Luke several persons are seen as filled by the Spirit: John the Baptist, and his parents; Simeon, Anna, Mary...
- Jesus points out the true motive for joy (Luke 10:20)
- Jesus Himself rejoices in the Holy Spirit
- Zacchaeus received Jesus joyfully
- parables (Luke 15) depict the joy of God at the repentance of a sinner
- Peace: peace follows on the joy that Jesus gives
- a peace came into the world at His coming
- the risen Christ gives peace (His first word to the Apostles)
- the disciples speak of peace throughout the world

Luke shows Jesus' concern for prayer

- All the Synoptics show Jesus at prayer: in Gethsemane, after the multiplication of loaves, in Capernaum after curing many
- Luke has 8 other circumstances: at baptism, in the desert, before choosing the apostles, before the confession of Peter, telling Peter that He had especially prayed for him; at the Transfiguration; before the disciples asked to be taught how to pray; on the cross for His executioners, when surrendering His soul to the Father
- Jesus recommended prayer
- parables of an importunate friend, of a widow with an unjust judge
- we must pray to obtain the Holy Spirit

Luke diffuses an atmosphere of joy and peace.

- the foretelling of the birth of John includes a promise of joy
- the unborn John leaps for joy at the visit of Mary
- the angel bids Mary rejoice
- she proclaims her joy in the Magnificat
- angels proclaim joy to the shepherds
- crowds proclaim joy at the works of Jesus they witnessed
- the 72 disciples return from their mission rejoicing

Luke takes a strong position on riches and poverty

- where Matthew speaks of “poor in spirit” Luke speaks of “poor.”
- where Matthew says “those who hunger and thirst after righteousness,” Luke says “you that hunger now”
- Luke says the poor are those who put their trust in God (in the Magnificat)
- there are more warnings against the danger of riches than any other evangelist
- selfishness is connected with riches; this is condemned in the Parable of the Rich Fool
- no man can serve God and mammon (money)
- Jesus lived as poor and among the poor
- in Luke, He is visited by shepherds, not Magi
- Mary and Joseph gave offering of the poor for the Infant Jesus' ransom.
- the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head; others have homes
- the disciples left everything and followed Him

In Luke, Jesus insists on renunciation.

- He advises no confidence in riches
- Luke quotes Jesus: “Sell your possessions and give alms” to the poor
- Luke quotes Jesus: my followers must renounce all for the sake of the kingdom
- Jesus tells the rich young man to sell all that he has and give to the poor

(Part II of this lesson is based on The Gospel According to Luke, a commentary by Wilfred J. Harrington)

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**QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 3**

## Luke 1

- Day 1 Read the Notes. Pay special attention to Luke's emphasis on Jesus' role under II C "The Themes of Luke."
- a. Which of these aspects of Jesus' ministry do you find most helpful?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. Why? (Thank the Holy Spirit for this effect for you.)
- Day 2 Read Luke 1:1-25, 1 Chronicles 24:10, Sirach 48:10 and Daniel 9:20-24. Ponder Luke 1:1 and 15-17. How can you carry out verse 16 in your life? Do you?
- Day 3 Read Luke 1:26-38, the Annunciation of Jesus
- a. List the information the angel Gabriel gives Mary about the child.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. To you, what is the most important information given? Why?
- Day 4 Read the following Old Testament "annunciations." Genesis 17:15-19, Judges 13:2-25, 1 Samuel 1:1-27, and 2:1-11.
- a. In what way were these women all alike, and in what way was Mary different?

- b. In Luke 1:31 and 34, what do you make of Mary's question?

Day 5 Read Luke 1:39-56.

- a. Find, in Luke 1:26-56, words which we use as a prayer, the Hail Mary.

- b. In Luke 1:44, what is especially important for us in our abortion age?

- c. What virtue of Mary does Elizabeth praise in verse 45? How does God want us to practice this?

Day 6 Read Luke 1:57-80, Psalm 41:14 and 72:18.

- a. What words of Zachary come from the Psalms?

- b. In Luke 1:41 and 67, what same words are said of Elizabeth and Zachary?

- c. Read Malachi 3:1-5 and Matthew 11:7-10, and Isaiah 40:3. In Luke 3:7-14, what does John do that carries out these Old Testament prophecies of him?