

# **LUKE - A STUDY GUIDE**

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## **THE CENTRAL QUESTION:**

### **What does this book/story say to us about God?**

This question may be broken down further as follows:

- a. Why did God do it/allow it?
  - b. Why did He record it for our study?
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1. Who was the author of Luke and Acts? What was his profession? Was he a Jew? Did he write primarily for Jews? Who was Theophilus? Was Luke a first-hand witness of the events about which he wrote? (Luke 1:2,3) Where did he get his information? What picture of God would you have if you had only Luke? Do you think Luke received any first-hand direct revelation to be included in this book? Where did he do his research? When and from whom did Luke first learn of Jesus? (Acts 16:6-10) Why would this prosperous Greek physician apparently suddenly give up everything and cast his lot with that little-known group of Jewish “believers”?
2. Historically, Luke’s writings were not accepted by some of the early Christians for many years. Can you think of any reason why that might have been? How many “Gospels” (accounts of the life of Christ) were written before Luke was written? Was Luke thinking of Matthew and Mark only when he said “many”? (Luke 1:1) Could you name some others? Did Luke mention any names in his Gospel that other writers did not mention?
3. How do you feel about the fact that an estimated ninety percent of Mark is apparently copied in either Matthew or Luke? If there were so many things to write about in the life of Christ that “if every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written,” (John 21:25) why is there so much repetition, even apparent copying in the three “synoptic” Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke?
4. Why are there differences between the genealogy in Matthew 1:1-17 and the one in Luke 3:23-38? Why did Matthew start from Abraham, and why did Luke end with Adam? Why did both of these men, especially Luke, trace the genealogy of Jesus through Joseph, who had no blood relationship with Jesus, rather than through Mary? (Or did he?) Why was Luke the one who recorded the most about the events connected with the birth, the childhood, and the youth of Jesus? Why was Luke the one to record the story of Jesus as a boy in the temple—the place and time when Jesus apparently first recognized that He was not “Joseph’s son”? (Luke 2:41-50)
5. Would any of the temptations of Jesus be a temptation to you? (Luke 4:1-13) If Jesus had performed a miracle in answer to the Devil’s challenges, would it have answered anything?
6. Why do you think Jesus was rejected when He went back to His home town of Nazareth? (Luke 4:1-30)
7. If Jesus planned for us to memorize and recite together the “Lord’s Prayer,” why did He give a different version in Luke 11:2-4 than in Matthew 6:9-13? Were these two prayers given on the same occasion?
8. What miracles, parables, or events are recorded only in Luke? The raising of the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-17); The naming of the women who followed Jesus (Luke 8:1-3); The sending out of the seventy-two (Luke 10:1-12, 17-20); The parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37); Mary sitting at Jesus’s feet while Martha served (Luke 10:38-42); The parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:13-21); The healing of the crippled woman (Luke

13:10-17); Healing the man with swollen arms and legs (Luke 14:1-6); The lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son (Luke 15); The rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31); Healing the ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19); The parable of the widow and the judge (Luke 18:1-8); The Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-24); The story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10); Jesus before Herod (Luke 23:6-12); The healing of Malchus's ear (Luke 22:51); The details of the walk to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35).

Do you recognize any pattern in this group of stories? (Think Samaritan, woman, and place.) Where did Luke learn about these stories? What do these differences tell us about God? Was the Holy Spirit reaching out to non-Jews through Luke? Are you more comfortable with Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John? Aren't you glad that we have all four of them?

9. What does the parable of the prodigal son—or lost son—tell us about God? (Luke 15:11-32) Is it only recorded in Luke because this parable was spoken originally to non-Jews? How could the other Gospel writers have left out such a significant story? Why did Luke include the parable of the rich man and Lazarus? (Luke 16:19-31) What was Jesus's main point in the context? Is it actually possible to speak back and forth from heaven to "hell"? Who is "Father Abraham"? What kind of chasm could prevent anyone (even God?) from passing over between the two? (Luke 16:26)
10. Why did Jesus disguise Himself for all that time that He was talking to the men on the road to Emmaus? (Luke 24:13-35)
11. Ultimately, what was the real reason why Jesus came and died? What if Jesus, having lived His life here, decided to return to heaven at the last minute before dying? Would it have made any difference? Who required the death of Jesus? What if Jesus had just died in Gethsemane? Would that have made any difference? Of what did Jesus actually die? Did He actually die of crucifixion?
12. Jesus said that He came to give His life as a ransom for many. (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; 1 Timothy 2:6; Hebrews 9:15) In what sense was the life and death of Christ a ransom? The idea of ransom suggests that a price is paid to an "enemy" to retrieve something of value.
13. Does the Bible anywhere suggest that God has said, "Love and trust Me, or I will kill you"?
14. Some have suggested that just as in Adam, all died, so in Christ, all have been made alive; (see Romans 5 & 6) and thus, a sort of mystical union exists between Christ and His people. Through this mystical union, sinners, in fact, die with Christ and thus, are able to rise with Him. In what sense could this be true? If this is all that is required to save sinners, why can't He save all sinners?
15. The widely accepted theory of forensic atonement suggests that "justice" demands the death of the sinner. In that view, in order to save sinners, God the Father agreed to accept the death of His Son in payment of the price of sin, and pronounced that justice was satisfied, thus removing the legal barrier so that He can accept sinners back again. Wouldn't a human judge be worthy of condemnation if He condemned the Innocent in order to free the guilty? As asked by the literary character Bozo/Boso in Anselm's circa 1033-1109 *Cur Deus Homo*, if God could only save sinners by condemning the Innocent, is He truly omnipotent? If, on the other hand, He could, but is not willing to do so, how are we to think of Him as wise and just? What justice could there possibly be in accepting the death of the most innocent Man who ever lived in place of the guilty? No human legal

system would accept that, so how can God do such a thing? And if this “legal” transaction makes it possible for God to save sinners because they are “covered with the righteousness of Christ,” would that suggest that we are brought into heaven without God the Father realizing that we are still sinners?

16. Was the life of Christ and His death primarily a “moral influence” on humans to convince us to live better lives? Was Christ’s death not really “necessary” at all? Was Christ’s death necessary for God to be able to forgive us? If so, why?
17. What is the meaning of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus? (Luke 16:19-31)
18. How would things have been different if the Father had come instead of the Son? Could you march through the golden streets of heaven and go up to the Father and spit in His face? What would He do? Jesus claimed that He and the Father are one. What does that mean? He told the disciples that if they had seen Him, they had seen the Father. (John 14:9)
19. How did Luke know that Jesus turned and looked straight at Peter? (Luke 22:61) If you were asked to draw the face of Jesus at that moment, what would you show? As Peter understood Jesus up to that point, what did he expect to see? Peter stumbled out to Gethsemane and wept and became a changed man. (DA 713.3) Judas went in before the Jewish leaders and threw down the coins. Then, he went out and committed suicide. Would it be correct to say, “Thus, God slew Judas”? (See 1 Chronicles 10:13,14.) This is a thought question. How do you interpret the Bible?
20. Luke gives us a marvelous picture of God through the life and death of Christ. We would lose so much without it. What parts of Luke’s Gospel are you most thankful for? What has he taught us about God?

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Last Modified: June 28, 2014 (from TG August 11, 2010 and March 24, 2014)

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