

Summary of the Gospel of Luke

Introduction

Luke was a Gentile, possibly from Antioch, and was both a medical doctor and an investigative historian. Luke's authorship was accepted unanimously by the early church fathers.

He was a close companion of the apostle Paul during his missionary journeys throughout Eastern Europe and Asia Minor, in Antioch, in Jerusalem and throughout Paul's imprisonment in Rome. Paul's acknowledgement of Luke's writings gives them apostolic authority.

It is generally accepted that Luke wrote the book of Acts around the time that its account concludes with Paul under house arrest in Rome, circa AD62, and that his Gospel was completed a short time before that, probably during AD60 or AD61.

Luke wrote to a man whom he addressed as Most Excellent Theophilus. Nothing else is known of him but suggests that he was a man of influence, and was probably an early Gentile convert to faith in Christ. However, in a broader sense, Luke clearly ascertained that his Gospel account would benefit a much wider audience of Gentiles and Jews.

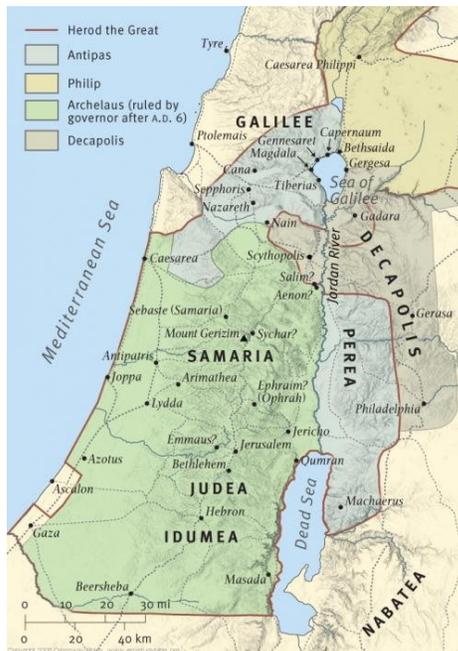
Luke probably had several goals in writing:

1. To assure his readers of the authenticity of his account.
2. To help his readers understand how Israel's rejection of Jesus, and the Gentiles' entrance into the Kingdom of God, were in accord with God's providential plan.
3. To clarify for his readers Jesus' teaching concerning the end times.
4. To emphasise that his readers need not fear Rome.

Key Themes:

1. God's sovereign rule over history.
2. The arrival and actual presence of the Kingdom of God.
3. The coming and indwelling of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus and his followers.
4. The great reversal taking place in the world, i.e. the first shall be last.
5. Believers are to live a life of prayer and practice good stewardship of their possessions.
6. The danger of the love of worldly riches is constantly emphasised in Luke.

Setting:



The map is of Palestine at the time of Jesus.

Luke is set primarily in the region of Palestine, which was under the rule of Rome but with some political autonomy given to King Herod the Great, and subsequently to his sons, who were made tetrarchs or rulers over a quarter of the kingdom.

Religious autonomy was also permitted under Roman authority and the Jewish Sanhedrin, made up of Pharisees, Sadducees and Teachers of the Law, were the dominant people at the time of Jesus.

Chapter One

I. Luke 1:1-4 - Introduction

The first chapter of Luke gives the reason for the writing of this Gospel. Luke told Theophilus that he was writing in order to explain what eye witnesses had seen, and thus give him the truth about what had happened. Theophilus means 'Friend of God' and some say 'Lover of God'. As such, some commentators use this to state the Gospel was, therefore, directed to all those who would come into that category, but most hold that Theophilus was a real person but nothing else about him is known about him.

II. Luke 1:5-2:52 - The Infancy Narrative

He writes about the visit of the angel Gabriel to an elderly priest called Zechariah. The angel foretold that Zechariah's wife Elizabeth would have a son, who would have the power of the Holy Spirit upon him from the day of his birth. The son was to be named John and he would lead many people in returning to the Lord. Zechariah doubted the message and was struck mute.

A few months later, Gabriel was sent to Nazareth in Galilee, with a message for a virgin named Mary, who was engaged to be married to Joseph; a direct descendant of King David. Mary was told that she would bear a son to be named Jesus, who would be called the Son of God and who would rule the people of Israel forever. Mary was told that her cousin Elizabeth would also have a son, even though she was past the age of motherhood.

Not long after, Mary went to see Elizabeth and the Holy Spirit came upon Elizabeth at their first meeting. She called Mary 'the mother of my Lord' and the baby John leaped with joy in her womb.

Mary sang praises to the Lord about what he had done and she remained with Elizabeth for about three months, probably for the birth, although we are not told that, before returning home.

When John was born, Zechariah was freed from his silence allowing him also to praise God.

Chapter Two

When Emperor Augustus Octavian declared that a census was to be taken, each man was to return to the town of his tribe in order to be registered.

It came time for Mary to give birth to Jesus. His birth was in a manger in the Judæan town of Bethlehem, as there was allegedly no room at the Inn. There were shepherds on the hillside keeping watch over their flocks, when an angel appeared to them and told them of the great event. Suddenly, there was a heavenly host, all singing and praising God. The shepherds hurried off to see what the angel had foretold.

Jesus was circumcised on the 8th day as required by God's law. After 6 weeks, Mary's time of purification was ended and it was time to present Jesus, as her first born, at the temple in Jerusalem to fulfil the laws of dedication. Simeon, a true servant of the Lord, was instructed, by the Holy Spirit, to be at the temple that he might see the individual who would save Israel. He came and broke into praise, expressing the thought that he could now die as he had seen his saviour. Mary and Joseph were surprised by what Simeon had said. He warned Mary that her child would be chosen by many and rejected by more. Mary would feel great joy and pain because of her son Jesus.

Anna was a long time widow of the tribe of Asher and served at the temple. Not much is known of Anna but she appeared to possess the gift of prophecy and served the people by praying for them; giving them what comfort she could. She praised God for the birth of Jesus and knew that he would set Israel free.

Jesus and his family then returned to Nazareth, where Jesus grew in knowledge becoming wise and he was clearly blessed by God.

When Jesus was 12, the family again travelled to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover, which was probably an annual event for them. On the way home, Joseph and Mary discovered that

Jesus was missing and they returned to Jerusalem to look for him. They found him in the temple, listening to the teachers of the law and asking questions of them.

His parents expressed their displeasure with him but he simply told them he was about his Father's business, something they failed to grasp.

Jesus then returned home with them and became fully submissive to them in honour of the 5th Commandment. Jesus continued to grow in strength and wisdom. God was pleased with him.



Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem

Chapter Three

III. Luke 3:1-4:15 - Preparation for the Ministry of Jesus

John began preaching when Tiberius was the Emperor and Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judæa. Herod Antipas was the ruler of Galilee.

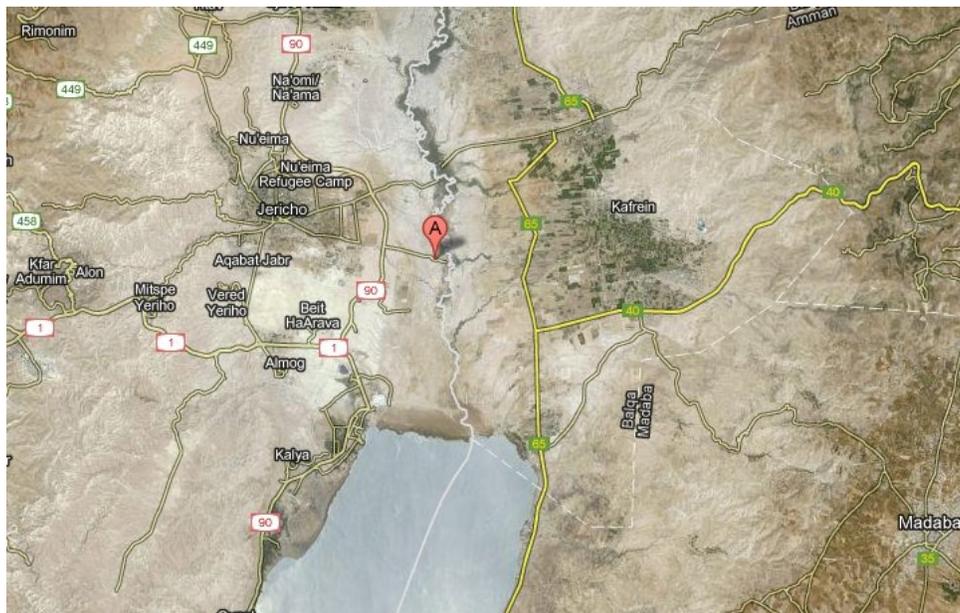
John began his ministry in the Jordan Valley and preached that the people needed to undergo a baptism of repentance turning back to God. Crowds of people began to follow John and he preached as God led him. He taught people how to live a better life regardless of whether they were a soldier, government official or tax collector. He was instructing people the need for them to change their lifestyles.

Many people started to wonder if John was the promised Messiah but he strongly denied this, pointing out that he only baptised with water but that the Messiah would baptise with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Luke only gives a brief account of Jesus' baptism in his Gospel but we do get the glorious image of the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus like a dove and the Father acknowledging him.

John then concludes this chapter with Jesus' genealogy to show that he is not only a descendant of King David but is the Son of God.

From other accounts of the baptism we know that, although they were cousins, John did not know Jesus before he encountered him on the river bank. He expected Jesus to baptise him but Jesus said, 'No, it has to be the other way round: <<to fulfil all righteousness>>' (Matthew 3:15).



The traditional baptism site of Qasr el-Yahud just north of The Dead Sea

Chapter Four

Following his baptism, Jesus went from the Jordan into the Judæan wilderness in order to confront the devil. For forty days the devil tested Jesus during which time he did not eat or drink anything.

At the time of writing this I had a great conversation with a former pastor, who has experienced the wilderness and described that it was far from being a 'God-forsaken' place,

but rather a place where 'the presence of God is powerfully evident'. This makes the temptation of Christ, and of us, all the more interesting when it comes in a place where the presence of God is felt and known, i.e. at times when we feel most at ease, rather than at times when we may feel abandoned, alone or in peril!

The devil did his utmost to test Jesus as though he were a mere mortal, which in many ways he was. He offered him worldly goods and power, in return for his allegiance to Satan, but Jesus prevailed and was clearly triumphant.

From this time in the wilderness, we can learn that we can serve God only, that we should not crave things that are not given to us by him, and that we should never test him.

IV. Luke 4:16-9:50 - The Ministry of Jesus in Galilee

Jesus then returned to his home town and on the Sabbath he read from the scriptures, stating that he was the one, chosen by God, to fulfil what was written about the Messiah, and that he was there to bring the good news. Initially, he was well received, but when people realised they thought they knew his origins, they turned on him and wanted to kill him.



The Synagogue in Gamla

Jesus left Nazareth and relocated to Capernaum, which became his main base during his ministry in Galilee. He taught the people there and healed a man with an evil spirit, which identified Jesus for who he really was.

News began to spread about Jesus and his power over evil spirits. We also have accounts of Jesus healing many sick people and his need to seek solitary places, where he could pray to the Father.

Chapter Five

Jesus was teaching by the Lake of Galilee. The people began crowding him and he felt pressed upon, so he had Simon, a local fisherman and boat-owner, take him out a short way so that he could sit down in the boat to teach the crowd.

After Jesus had finished teaching, he instructed Simon to go out into deeper water and let down his nets to catch some fish. Peter replied that they had fished all night and caught nothing but he did as the Lord requested anyway, which is always a smart thing to do. The resulting catch was huge. Simon immediately knelt down and confessed his sins before Jesus and said that he was not worthy to have the Lord with him.

In Luke's account, Simon later named Peter or Cephas meaning a rock, became the first disciple that Jesus called. Although not explicitly stated by Luke, it is likely that Andrew, John and James also became disciples at this time as they were partners in the catch. They would now become fishers of men.

Large crowds continued to follow Jesus and he continued to heal people as required. The friends of one man were so desperate for his healing that they climbed onto the roof, took part of it off and lowered him in on a stretcher. When Jesus told the man his sins were forgiven, the Pharisees began talking against Jesus stating, quite correctly of course, that only God had the power and authority to forgive sins.

Jesus then chose Levi or Matthew, a tax collector, as a disciple. This also upset the Pharisees, as tax collectors were held in low regard and considered among the worst of sinners. Jesus reminded the Pharisees that it is the sick that need a doctor; and it was to the sick that he came.

Jesus proclaimed that he had come to earth to call sinners back to God. He continued his ministry in Galilee.

Chapter Six

One Sabbath day the disciples were seen picking and eating grains of wheat. The Pharisees were upset that the disciples were violating the Sabbath as this was considered work.

Jesus continued healing on the Sabbath and he reminded the people that the Sabbath was a good day to do good deeds.

The Pharisees became even more incensed and started planning to get rid of what they saw as a threat to their eminent positions in the community. That night, Jesus again goes to a mountain alone to pray.

The next day, he selected his remaining disciples; they departed from the mountain and went to the plain, where he was met by large crowds. Here, Jesus delivered a similar sermon to that recorded in Matthew Chapters 5-7 and known there as the 'Sermon on the Mount'.

It was full of great teaching, including love your enemy, as well as your neighbours and friends. Jesus stated that people should not be quick to judge others as to their deeds and to focus more on keeping themselves from sinning, rather than accusing others.

Jesus alludes to good and bad people being identified by their fruit. He reminded them that they do bad things out of what is in their hearts and that true believers build their houses on solid rock, rather than the shifting sands of the desert that cause many to stumble and fall. Those built on rock, i.e. on the Word of God, will withstand everything that comes against them. Whereas those built on sand, i.e. the things of this world, will crumble as they have no true foundation.

Chapter Seven

In Capernaum an army officer's servant is seriously ill. The officer heard about Jesus and sent some Jewish friends to ask him to come to heal his servant. This centurion loved Galilee and its people; he had a record of helping the Jews whenever he could.

Jesus turned aside to go to his house but the centurion asked that he not come into the house because he, the centurion, was unworthy and he did not come to Jesus himself for that same

reason. He knew that Jesus only had to speak the word and his servant would be healed and so it was. But Jesus spoke of his amazement at the man's faith in comparison to that of the Jews.

On arrival in the outskirts of Nain, a crowd appeared carrying the bier with the body of a widow's only son. Jesus felt sorrow for the women and raised her son back to life simply by touching the bier. The people were understandably amazed and fame of this spread quickly around the whole region. The people held Jesus to be a great prophet and praised God.

John the Baptist sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus if he was the one they were waiting for or should they expect another. Jesus pointed to his teaching, healing and raising of the dead, and told them to report back to John what they had seen and heard. After they left, Jesus showed great respect for John by saying that there was no-one greater than he on earth but that in the Kingdom of God, even the least was greater than John. The Pharisees and scribes continued to disbelieve in Jesus and were determined to discredit him.

A Pharisee named Simon invited Jesus for a meal. While in his house, a sinful woman brought some expensive perfume and she began washing Jesus' feet and drying them with her hair. Simon exclaimed that if Jesus were a real prophet he would know what kind of woman she was. Jesus replied that Simon had failed to follow the normal hospitable requirements of providing water for guests to wash their feet, and indicated he was wrong to consider himself more worthy than the woman. The woman had much to be forgiven and, as a sinner of such standing, would be forgiven much. Simon, who considered himself better than her, would not be forgiven for as much although he needed forgiveness in just the same way. Jesus forgave the woman and sent her on her way. This again caused much concern, as the people knew that only God could forgive sins.

Chapter Eight

Many women came into the life of Jesus and they chose to help him in his ministry. One woman of special interest was Mary Magdalene, who once had seven demons within her. Some of these women were so influential, or more likely convicted in their faith, that they persuaded their husbands also to help both financially and, with the influence they had, even into the court of Herod Antipas.

Jesus described his followers with an agricultural analogy of seeds that fell in different places, with differing results. Only those that are planted in good soil, i.e. a heart grounded in and adhering to the Word of God would grow, ripen and become a good harvest.

He likened them to a lamp, whose light is meant to be seen and to bring light into a room to help others to see as well. As believers, it is our responsibility to take and explain the Word to others. Those that spread their light will become even brighter light, while those that don't, will become dimmer lights. Jesus explained that his true family were those who heard and obeyed the Word of God.



By calming a storm on the Lake of Galilee, Jesus displayed his awesome power in controlling nature. Despite being mostly experienced sailors, the disciples had been fearful of drowning so Jesus chastised them, not for being frightened but for their lack of faith.

A fishing boat like this from Jesus' time was discovered near Lake Tiberius.

On the other side of the lake they found a man in a pitiful state, besieged by a legion of demons that left him wandering naked in a cemetery; a total outcast from society. Jesus drove the demons out into a herd of pigs, which then immediately stampeded into the lake and were drowned. On hearing this, the owners of the pigs and their community demanded that Jesus should leave the region.

On returning to the Galilæan side of the lake, Jesus was told of the sick daughter of a man named Jairus. As he made his way to Jairus' house, crowds were pressing in on him. A woman, who had menstrual bleeding for 12 years, touched Jesus and was immediately healed. Jesus felt the power go out from him and demanded to know who had touched him. His disciples were dismayed as there were great crowds all around pushing and shoving all the time, but Jesus knew that this was different. The woman confessed, told her testimony and was blessed by Jesus for her faith.

Just then someone came from Jairus' house to report his daughter had died. Jesus went anyway and found the place filled with wailing mourners. When Jesus told them to be quiet as the girl was not dead but just sleeping they laughed at him. Apart from the parents and an inner core of his disciples Jesus cleared the house, took hold of the girl's hand and told her to get up, which she immediately did; another example of raising the dead.

Chapter Nine

At this time, Jesus gave his disciples the power over demons and diseases and sent them out into the country in pairs. The disciples went from town to town, telling the people about Jesus and healing them in his name.

Herod began to worry about Jesus. Some believed that he was John the Baptist who had come back to life after Herod had beheaded him. Others believed he was the prophet Elijah. Herod was eager to meet with Jesus.

The disciples returned and were euphoric, telling Jesus all that had happened. Jesus took the disciples to Bethsaida, where they could be alone and talk. A large crowd had followed them; Jesus had compassion, taught them and healed many. As time got on, it was realised they had no food to eat other than 5 loaves and 2 small fish. Jesus got the people to sit down, gave thanks to God and divided up the food so there was enough to feed everyone what they wanted. Afterwards, the disciples collected up 12 baskets full of left over bread! There were at least 5,000 men in the crowd.

Later, when they were on their own, Jesus asked them who the people thought he was. Most thought he was a prophet but Simon Peter, through the Spirit, recognised he was the Christ of God. Jesus warned them not to tell anyone.

He also explained for the first time that the Christ had to suffer and die but on the third day he would rise. He spoke of the cost of being a disciple and remarked that some of them would see him in his glory.

Eight days later Jesus took Peter, John and James up a mountain to pray. Jesus was transfigured and joined by Moses and Elijah. The disciples were terrified and Jesus warned them to say nothing of this until after he was raised from death, which the disciples again could not comprehend. They returned to join the others and continued in his ministry of healing the sick.

Jesus again tells them what will happen to him but again they fail to understand.

A power struggle emerges within the ranks of the disciples because they did not understand who was the greatest in heaven. Jesus instructed them that they must come to him as little children would and that the humblest among them would be the greatest.

They told Jesus about others that were preaching the Gospel in his name but who were not part of their group. Jesus replied that it was OK for this to happen, as those who were for him were not against him and they should not be restricted from doing so.

V. [Luke 9:51-19:27 - The Journey to Jerusalem](#)

This section is the longest in the Gospel of Luke.

Jesus and his disciples then started out on what would be his final journey to Jerusalem. They came to a Samaritan village that refused to receive Jesus. Two of the disciples wanted to rain down fire from heaven on them for this but Jesus reminded them of grace.

Jesus again reminded his followers of the cost of being a disciple.



The Temple on Mount Gerizim

Chapter Ten

We have an account of Jesus sending out 72 of his disciples to teach and heal in towns and villages that he would also be going to. He told them that the fields were ready for harvest but that the workers were few. They were sent as sheep among wolves and were instructed to take no extra provisions but to travel light. Their mission was to tell people that the Kingdom of God was coming. The towns that would reject them were, in fact, rejecting God and would be so judged at the right time.

They returned to Jesus speaking jubilantly about the successes they had witnessed but Jesus reminded them that their joy should be that their names were now written in heaven, not because of their recent mission but because they had chosen to follow Jesus.

One expert in the law asked Jesus what he needed to do to obtain eternal life. After Jesus said 'What does scripture say?' the man replied, 'Love God' and 'Love your neighbour'. Jesus told the man he was right in what he said. The man then asked Jesus, in a way to try to deflect the next requirement, 'Who is my neighbour?' Jesus then told the parable of the Good Samaritan. Jesus then asked the man 'who was the good neighbour?' so the man said, 'The one who was kind to someone in need'. Jesus told him to go and do likewise.

We then have Jesus in Bethany at the house of Mary and Martha. Martha complains to Jesus that Mary was not doing her share in helping prepare the meal but was spending her time listening to Jesus instead. Jesus rebuked Martha and pointed out that Mary was doing what was really important, hearing about the Kingdom of God.



Mounts Gerizim (Blessings) and Ebal (Curses)

Initially, the disciples were denied from teaching in Samaria, although Jesus himself did, see John Chapter 4. In Acts 1:8, Jesus instructs them to take the Word to Samaria as part of their mission, as the Samaritans had some misguided ideas about God and needed to hear the Gospel like everyone else. Philip was the first recorded evangelist to go into Samaria. See Acts Chapter 8.

The Samaritans were a racially mixed group of partly Jewish and partly Gentile ancestry who were disdained by both Jews and non-Jews. The scripture in 2 Kings 17:24-31 describes how the king of Assyria, probably Shalmaneser (727-722BC), brought foreign people to settle in Samaria in 722BC. The Samaritans claim it was Esarhaddon (681-669BC), who was responsible for repopulating the land. This would have to have been a later influx due to the time lapse between the capture of the land and its repopulation.

Over time they had intermarried with some Jews, who had remained in the area.

Many inhabitants of this region between Judæa and Galilee were descendants of the OT northern kingdom of Israel, although from the Jewish perspective these Samaritans had assimilated strongly into non-Jewish culture and had intermarried with Mesopotamian colonists. The Samaritans had their own version of the Pentateuch, their own temple on Mount Gerizim and their own rendering of Israelite history.

Chapter Eleven

In response to their request, Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray through what we now call the Lord's Prayer, a fuller version of which is in Matthew Chapter 6. Jesus reminded them of the need to pray continuously, especially for things that hadn't appeared to be realised or remained unfulfilled. If you keep asking in the name of Jesus, one day the prayer will be answered. All

who ask will receive, all who seek will find and the door will be opened before them. The Holy Spirit will be given freely to all who ask Jesus.

Jewish leaders claimed that, because of his miraculous works, Jesus was working in league with the devil. Jesus replied that any house divided would fall and the work he was doing was proof that the Kingdom of God was already among the people on earth.

Jesus taught that when an evil spirit leaves a person it will return unless they hold on to the truth. If it finds that the person has regressed in terms of their sinful nature, then it will repossess them with even more power than before. The people who are really blessed are those who hear Jesus and obey God's will.

The religious leaders kept demanding a sign from Jesus to show he was who he claimed to be. Jesus called them evil as they would not believe what they had seen and that the only sign they would get would be the sign of Jonah. The people who failed to believe in this sign would, in turn, be symbolically condemned by the people of Nineveh. Believers were told to let their light shine so that salvation could be brought to the entire world.

The Pharisees found another complaint against Jesus. One of them invited Jesus to his home to eat and commented that he failed to follow basic hygiene requirements by washing his hands. Jesus in turn was critical of the Pharisees, who were more worried about cleaning what was on the outside, rather than the man on the inside, i.e. the heart. He further accused them of cheating people through incorrect teaching and of not loving God in the way they should. Jesus ended up proclaiming a number of woes on the religious leaders.

The following table lists the major occasions in Luke where Jesus prayed:

Reference:	Occasion:
Luke 3:21	The Baptism of Jesus
Luke 5:16	Prior to his first major encounter with the scribes and Pharisees
Luke 6:12	Prior to choosing the 12 apostles
Luke 9:18	Prior to Peter's confession
Luke 9:28-29	The transfiguration
Luke 10:21-24	Prayer after the mission of the seventy-two
Luke 11:2-4	The Lord's Prayer
Luke 11:5-13	The Parable of the Midnight Friend
Luke 18:1-8	The Parable of the Unjust Judge
Luke 21:36	The Watchful Prayer
Luke 22:32	Intercession for Peter
Luke 22:39-46	Prayer at Gethsemane
Luke 23:34,46	Prayer on the Cross

Chapter Twelve

As they continue their journey toward Jerusalem, Jesus gives his disciples additional instruction.

Jesus reminds the people that everything will be made known and become public knowledge. All that the Pharisees sought to hide from the people would one day be made available for everyone to see and talk about. The people will not be fooled forever and whatever secret is kept, will one day be shouted from the very rooftops in the community.

Man should not fear another man because the worst he can do is kill the body. We should fear God who can cast us into hell. Speaking out against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but blaspheming the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

Jesus was asked by one brother to settle a father's estate between two brothers. Jesus told them that it doesn't make any difference over how much we own, as it will not make our life secure. He then tells the Parable of the Rich Farmer, who builds bigger stores on the day his life is taken from him, leaving all his earthly wealth to someone else. It is not good for believers to store up wealth on earth for they do not know when their soul will be required of them.

God knows and provides what people need on earth. People should work at storing up treasures in heaven and not on earth. As followers of God everyone should be ready to receive God.

Jesus told his disciples that his coming into the world would cause strife within families. Families would be split over the issues of believing in God and doing what was required for the Kingdom. Jesus came into the world to encourage people to make the right choice in this life.



Bishop John Hooper - February 1555

Chapter Thirteen

The need for people to turn to God has been stressed many times. When bad things happen to people it was supposed that they were worse sinners than others who had not suffered in the same way. Jesus teaches the disciples that this is not the case. Things can happen to people irrespective of their sins. The one thing that people need to be reminded of is that everyone will die. God allows us to live in the hope of eternal salvation but the message is clear, that it is only for those who choose to believe in and follow Jesus in this life.

Jesus again heals on the Sabbath. The priest complains saying this lady could have been healed on any of the other six days and that she should have come to be healed then. Jesus pointed out that they would untie their animals to take them to water and to feed them on a Sabbath; surely it was right to release a daughter of God from the bonds of Satan on a Sabbath too! The religious leaders were humiliated and upset at this.

Jesus compares the Kingdom of God with a number of well known examples, such as a mustard seed, which is very small and yet produces a large tree for birds to rest in, and yeast, where a small amount can make dough rise for bread.

He also pointed out that, for a non-believer trying to get into heaven after death, was like trying to get into a house after the door was locked. You can knock but the door will not be opened to those who are unknown.



A Mustard Seed

Chapter Fourteen

Jesus was eating a Sabbath meal with an important Pharisee. All were watching Jesus and were wondering what he was going to do. A man with oedema got up and Jesus noticed him. Jesus asked those at the meal if it was right to heal on the Sabbath or not, but no one answered him.

Jesus healed the man and said that if a son or an ox fell into a well on the Sabbath then everyone would pull them out.

Jesus also spoke of humility when a guest was in a house for dinner. He said that the guest should not automatically assume the best seat but should seek the lowest position. From there the host could ask them to move to a more prominent position but if they took the highest place initially and a more prominent guest arrived they would be asked by the host to move down and would feel humiliated. He said, never put yourself above anyone else. Also, never invite those who will invite you back in return but invite those like the poor who cannot invite you back. God will reward your humility.

The Parable of the Great Feast shows that many who are invited will make reasons not to be there and those that finally attend will be those that would not normally be invited to such a feast. Such is the Kingdom of God.

Jesus reminded his disciples of the sacrifices they must make to be true followers including giving up family and home. The disciple will not worry about possessions or clothes but will follow Jesus through love, thus retaining the 'saltiness' needed to be a true follower.

Chapter Fifteen

As the Pharisees saw Jesus eating and talking with tax collectors and other sinners, they began questioning his motives. Jesus stated that he was the good shepherd and always in search for the one sheep that is not in the fold at night. Jesus will rejoice over one sinner that turns back to God and the angels will rejoice too.

Jesus then tells the story of the Prodigal Son, who took his inheritance early and squandered it on loose living, hence prodigal. When all was gone, he realised his error and returned to his father expecting to become like one of the workers but the father welcomed him back as if greeting royalty. His brother was less than magnanimous and complained bitterly to his father about the other son's treatment, as he thought it was unfair but the father said 'He was dead and now is alive again, what could be greater?' The Kingdom of God is for those who come back from their dead lives to live with and for God, which is always something worth celebrating.

Chapter 15 confirms what God has consistently shown Israel throughout the OT, which is that grace and mercy abound and that he will rejoice for each and every individual who returns to him. But once again the religious leaders object to and reject Jesus' teaching.

Chapter Sixteen

In the world, people try to take care of themselves. In essence, they try to ingratiate themselves so that they might have somewhere to go and something to belong to if bad times come upon them, even if it cheats someone else. Jesus called this wicked money and those who try to take care of themselves in such a manner as wicked servants. If a man cannot be trusted with little things then there's no way in which he will be trusted with larger things. Man cannot serve two masters at the same time.

We must be either faithful to God or drawn to money and the trappings of the world. God sees what is in our hearts. The way we treat each other and our thoughts about one another are known by God. Those who have nothing in terms of the world but serve God, are much better off than those with lots of possessions and much wealth but do not serve him. We must listen to the prophets and have faith in God in order to be saved. The story of Lazarus shows there are no second chances once life on earth is over.

Chapter Seventeen

Jesus told his disciples that there would always be something that causes people to sin but when someone causes someone else to sin, it will be much worse for the person who causes it. Teachers must never deliberately lead people into sin and, if guilty of this, it would be better for that person to be drowned at sea than to continue living. God holds teachers of his word to a higher level even for unintentional errors.

The disciples asked to have their faith strengthened so they would not lead people astray. As Jews, the disciples were expected to be grateful for doing their job and appreciative of what Jesus had done for them. Many times people forget what God has done for them and this may condemn them to suffering.

The Pharisees continued to press Jesus about when the Kingdom of God would come upon the earth. Jesus reminded them that the kingdom would come like Noah's flood or the fire that destroyed Sodom.

Not everyone would be saved at the Second Coming of Jesus. People would be together then one would be taken and the other left to ponder what had happened.

Chapter Eighteen

Jesus again reminded the disciples of the need for persistent prayer. God will always hear our prayers and will be concerned about them. One day all prayers will be answered. God sees our hearts and knows who really cares about following his will.

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector shows that when one man thinks he is better than another, it is rarely true, at least not in the eyes of God. In order for God to honour him, the man must first humble himself in the sight of God and all other people. Only when a man humbles himself to become like a little child will the Kingdom of God belong to him.

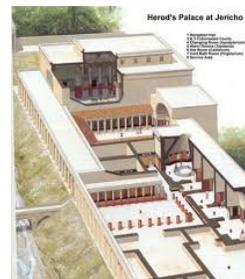
The Parable of the Rich Ruler shows how frequently money or other earthly desires become a barrier to us getting really close to God. The people become concerned and wonder how anyone could enter. Jesus instructs them that there are certain things that man cannot do but that God can accomplish all things. With God all things are possible.

Jesus again mentions his pending death. He tells his disciples that they are on their way to Jerusalem, where he would be handed over to those who would kill him. At the end of three days, he told them, he would rise from the grave. The disciples still did not understand what they were being told and they discussed this among themselves.

En route to Jerusalem, Jesus continues to heal people. He heals a blind man and when the crowd witness this, they praise God.



Jericho as it is today



Herod's Jericho Palace

Chapter Nineteen

It was at this time that Jesus meets Zacchæus, a chief tax collector in Jericho. He was a very wealthy man, mostly because his trade was a dishonest one. Zacchæus wanted to see Jesus but he was a small man, so he climbed a tree that was on the route that Jesus would take. When Jesus got to the tree, he looked up and told Zacchæus to come down as he wanted to stay at Zacchæus' house that night. Zacchæus and his household became believers that very day.

The crowd that was following Jesus believed that, when they reached Jerusalem, the Kingdom of God would come. When Jesus heard this, he told them of the story of the rich man who went to a foreign country to become king; although there was a lot of opposition from those who remained behind, who didn't want him as king.

Before leaving, he gave his servants each a sum of money to do business with. Two of the servants did well, saw a good return on their master's money, were blessed and given more responsibility. A third servant told his master that he had done nothing with the money and returned it to him without interest. He was chastised and cast out. God expects those who are followers of Jesus to use what they have been given to extend the Kingdom of God.

VI. Luke 19:28-21:38 - The Ministry of Jesus in Jerusalem

Jesus continued the journey to Jerusalem via Bethany and Bethphage. He instructs his disciples as to where they will find a donkey's colt for him to ride into the city to fulfil the scriptures. Jesus arrives in Jerusalem to a rapturous reception and he weeps over the city because of what he knows has become of it and what is still to transpire.

He goes straight to his Father's house, i.e. Herod's temple, where he clears out those selling livestock and changing money, saying they had made it a den of robbers. He returns there every day that week to continue his teaching.



An image of Bethany today



Jerusalem falls to the Romans in AD70

Chapter Twenty

Jesus is challenged by the religious leaders as to the authority of his teaching. He responded by asking them a question about John the Baptist. They were fearful and would not answer, so neither would Jesus.

Jesus told them the Parable of the Tenants, which represents the treatment of God by the religious leaders. The owner goes away and leaves the tenants to care for the vineyard. The owner first sends some of his servants, i.e. the prophets, to claim his share of the crop but they

refused to give any, beating some of the servants and killing others. Finally, the owner sends his only son. When the tenants see this, they say that, if they kill the heir, then they can have it all for themselves, which is what they did. The religious leaders knew Jesus had spoken out against them but did nothing directly about it. Instead, they sent in some spies.

The spies tried to trap Jesus by asking whether it was lawful to pay taxes to Cæsar or not. If he had said 'yes', then the Jewish people would be angry and he would have become unpopular. Had he said 'no', he was in danger of being charged with insurrection by the Romans. He got someone to give him a Denarius and asked, 'Whose inscription is on it?' They confirmed it was Cæsar, so he said they should give to Cæsar what was his and to God what belonged to him.

The Sadducees, who do not believe in the resurrection of the dead, asked Jesus a question on marriage and the resurrection to trap him. They told the story of seven brothers. The first married a woman but died leaving no children. Under the Law of Moses, the next brother had to marry her but he too died, leaving no children. This continued until all seven and the woman too, were dead. They then asked whose wife she would be at the resurrection of the dead, as she had been married to all seven brothers, but Jesus corrects their misunderstanding of scripture, and of God's power, in that we will not have the same relationships in heaven; instead will live our lives purely to God.

The chapter concludes with a delightful account, which shows that the Messiah is not the Son of David but the Lord of David. Jesus then warns his disciples about the scribe's hypocrisy and indicates the disciples must not emulate them.



Denarius with the image of Tiberius Cæsar

Chapter Twenty One

Through the example of a poor widow's offering, Jesus shows us that our own giving should be sacrificial.

On leaving the temple, the disciples point out the beauty of its structure. Jesus then goes into a detailed account of both the end times and also the destruction of the temple that would occur in AD70 during the Jewish-Roman war.

Believers are to be prepared, at all times, for the Second Coming of the Christ and should not be caught out by it. They have nothing to fear if they are ready.

Jesus continues to teach daily in the temple courts but leaves the city and goes out to the Mount of Olives each evening.

Chapter Twenty Two

VII. Luke 22:1-23:56 - The Suffering and Death of Jesus

Satan enters Judas who agrees to betray Jesus to the authorities in return for money.

Here we have a brief description of the preparation and events of the Last Supper and the institution of Communion that comes from it. During the supper, a dispute breaks out again between the disciples about who would be greatest between them; and Jesus prophesises Peter's denial of him.

They move out to the Mount of Olives, where Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane, before being betrayed by the kiss and then arrested. A disciple cuts off the ear of a servant of the priest and Jesus immediately heals that servant.



The Church of All Nations



The Garden of Gethsemane

Jesus is taken to the house of the High Priest, where Peter, in fear of his own safety, denies even knowing Jesus; this is what Jesus had prophesied during the supper earlier on.

Jesus is mocked and abused by his guards before being taken before the Sanhedrin at day break. He is then questioned about his origin and Jesus confirms he is the Son of God, which the priests hold as proof of his blasphemy.

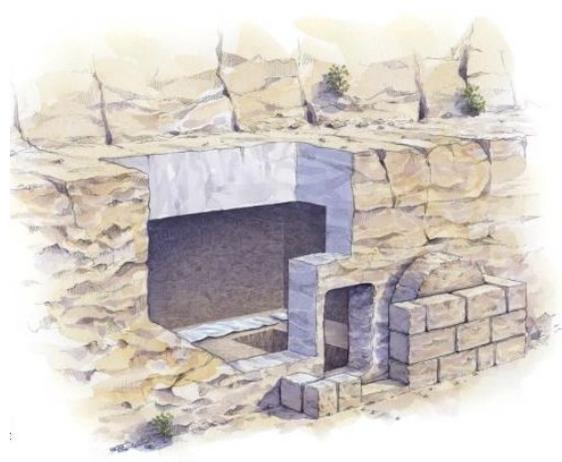
Chapter Twenty Three

We have Jesus before Pilate and Herod. Pilate finding nothing wrong with Jesus then questions the religious leaders and the crowd, who insist that Pilate release an insurrectionist but crucify Jesus.

Jesus undertakes the journey to the place called The Skull, where he is crucified between two criminals and we have a dialogue between them. We then have a brief account of the supernatural occurrences at the time of Jesus death, his subsequent burial in a tomb and the witnesses that saw it.



You are my king - Candi Pearson



Tomb similar to that in which Jesus was laid

Chapter Twenty Four

VIII. Luke 24:1-53 - The Resurrection

The women discover the empty tomb early on Sunday morning and are told by an angel that the Christ is risen from death. They return to tell the disciples, who initially don't believe them, so Peter, accompanied by John, runs to the tomb to check for himself.

Jesus appears before two disciples who were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They are kept from recognising him and he explains the scriptures to them as to why the Christ had to suffer and die. On arrival at their home, he reveals himself to them whilst breaking bread and then disappears. The disciples immediately return to Jerusalem to inform the others.

Having received news of the empty tomb, the apostles were in a locked upper room, discussing this amazing news, when suddenly Jesus appeared in their midst. Initially, the apostles thought he was a ghost but Jesus reassured them by showing his hands, feet and the wound in his side. He ate some fish and then spent some time with them, opening their minds to the scriptures.

He spent a period of about 40 days with the disciples, giving them final instructions. One day, while sharing time with his disciples on the Mount of Olives, Jesus ascended into heaven. The disciples then returned to Jerusalem, went into the temple and praised God.



Mount Of Olives

Closing Remarks

The Mount of Olives was the place from which Jesus made his Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem just seven weeks earlier. It was on Olivet, in the Garden of Gethsemane, where his suffering and anguish began as he accepted the cup from his Father.

It would probably have offered a view of his crucifixion across the Kidron Valley and the city, and it was from here that he ascended into heaven. It will be the location to which he returns when God ordains it to be so.

The story now continues with the giving of the Holy Spirit and the building of the early church. Refer to the material on the Acts of the Apostles for details of this.