

Telling the Story, Part 2: Luke

How do you begin to tell the story, the narrative of Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary, the Messiah? We have four written narratives of the actions and teachings of Jesus, culminating in his suffering, death, burial, and resurrection-ascension. Each one is written by a disciple of Jesus. Two are apostles who accompanied Jesus for three years (Matthew and John) and the two others are written by close associates of apostles, Mark (Peter's memoirs) and Luke, who traveled with Paul and did historical research. These four present Jesus in the days of his flesh as he lived among the people. We also have one who tells the story of Jesus' current ministry in heaven, namely the author of Hebrews. It is instructive to see how each begins to tell the story of Jesus. Now the story of Jesus is actual interpreted facts which have the power when received by faith to connect people savingly to God. We refer to this as "the gospel." Paul writes in Romans 1:16-17, ¹⁶*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.* ¹⁷*For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."*

Luke writes an introduction which tells his method and purpose in writing the narrative of Jesus. "Many have undertaken to compile a narrative about the events that have been fulfilled among us, ² just as the original eyewitnesses and servants of the word handed them down to us. ³ So it also seemed good to me, since I have carefully investigated everything from the very first, to write to you in an orderly sequence, most honorable Theophilus, ⁴ so that you may know the certainty of the things about which you have been instructed" (Luke 1:1-4).

Luke gives a two-part account. He begins the second part, the Book of Acts, with these words, "I wrote the first narrative, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach ² until the day he was taken up, after he had given instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. ³ After he had suffered, he also presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God."

Note that Luke is writing an orderly account of the events of Jesus' life from birth to resurrection and ascension, based on eyewitness accounts and records. He continues his narrative in part two called "Acts" with the acts of the ascended Christ by the Holy Spirit in the early Christian leaders. He writes like a research historian focused on the Man Jesus, the

Messiah. It appears he interviewed principal participants such as Mary, Jesus' mother. He addresses his gospel to a Gentile named Theophilus. He stresses that Jesus is the Savior of people who place their trust in him. A key verse is Luke 19:9-10 "*Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.* ¹⁰ *For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.*"

Luke begins Jesus' genealogy at chapter 3 verse 23 and there we find contrasts to Matthew's genealogy. Most notably it is longer and it traces Jesus' family line all the way to Adam in the garden. The question then is why? In addition, the placement of the genealogy of Jesus in Luke is very significant in how he presents the ministry of Jesus. In chapters 1-2 he summarizes the infancy and childhood of Jesus. Chapter 3 opens with the Forerunner Prophet named John announcing the arrival of the Messiah. The section closes with Jesus' baptism and the voice of the Father as Jesus takes up his work as Messiah. "²¹ When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened ²² and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

²³ Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry." Then follows his genealogy which traces Jesus' bloodline all the way to Noah and Adam. "He was the son, so it was thought (as was supposed), of Joseph, the son of Heli, ²⁴ the son of...Nathan, David, Shem, Noah... the son of Seth, *the son of Adam, the son of God.*" **Jesus is not simply the Messiah of the Jews but is the universal Savior of all people.** The genealogy is placed just before Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. Luke thus connects Jesus with the two temptations in the earlier section of history, Adam's temptation in the garden of Eden and later Israel's temptation in the wilderness journey to Canaan. Both Adam and later Israel were called son of God. Hosea 11:1 *When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son.*

"Son of Man" was Jesus' favorite self-designation and identifies him as fully human, the one who overcame all the temptations and assaults of the devil. Jesus recaps both Adam and Israel in their temptations — both are called sons of God in the Old Testament. But where Adam in Eden and Israel in the wilderness failed, he was victorious. He is the perfect human and Son of God. Jesus is therefore the Second or Last Adam and he is the True Israel.

Paul interprets Jesus as the Last Adam in Romans 5:12ff which begins with these words, "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—To be sure, sin was in the world before the

law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.

¹⁵ But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! ¹⁶ Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. ¹⁷ For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

¹⁸ Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. ¹⁹ For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

1 Corinthians 15: 21-22 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

The term, "Son of Man," also has reference to Jesus' deity, drawing on Daniel 7:13-14 ¹³

"I saw in the night visions,

and behold, with the clouds of heaven
there came one like a son of man,
and he came to the Ancient of Days
and was presented before him.

¹⁴ And to him was given dominion
and glory and a kingdom,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him;
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
which shall not pass away,
and his kingdom one
that shall not be destroyed.

Luke presents Jesus as the **Seed of the Woman** prophesied in the curse God pronounced on the Tempter snake in Genesis 3:15

¹⁴ The LORD God said to the serpent,

*"Because you have done this,
I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel."*

Romans 16:20

²⁰ *The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*

Previously we asked the question, "Why does Luke trace Jesus' bloodline to Adam?" Now we can see that Luke goes all the way back to Adam to show that Jesus is the Second Adam, acting as Head for a new humanity. And he comes as the promised Seed of the woman who will crush Satan's head, thus bringing salvation to all the earth's peoples who come in faith to Him.

A key verse that helps one see Luke's gospel narrative as a whole is Luke 2:28-32 spoken by the aged prophet Simeon at the temple dedication of Jesus. Then he took Him in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

²⁹ "Now, Lord, You are letting Your bond-servant depart in peace,

According to Your word;

³⁰ For my eyes have seen Your salvation,

³¹ Which You have prepared in the presence of all the peoples:

³² *A light for revelation for the Gentiles,*

And the glory of Your people Israel."

Luke in his two-part work presents Jesus as the Savior of the world.

When Jesus passed through Jericho on his way to Jerusalem he called Zacchaeus who was in a sycamore tree to come down and invited him to his house. ⁹ "Today salvation has come to this house," Jesus told him, "because he too is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ **For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost.**" Luke 19:9-10

Luke's life and ministry narrative overview of Jesus ends with the declaration of Jesus that all the world is to hear the saving message. Luke 24

⁴⁴ He told them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He also said to them, "This is what is written:^[h] The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷ **and repentance for^[i] forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed in his name to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem.** ⁴⁸ **You are witnesses of these things.** ⁴⁹ And look, I am sending you^[j] what my Father promised. As for you, stay in the city^[k] until you are empowered^[l] from on high. He opens his second volume with these words: ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and **you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.**"

⁹ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight." Luke continues his story of Jesus with his activity on earth by the Holy Spirit among his followers as they share the story of salvation through deeds and words of Jesus' Spirit endowed disciples. Following the martyrdom of Stephen and the unleashed persecution in Judea we read in Acts 8:1 *Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.*

Let Luke introduce Jesus to you and let him help you get to know this Son of Man who came into our world. Read the whole narrative Luke-Acts together and follow the journeys of Jesus in his ministry on earth; then watch him work through his followers from heaven, where he reigns as Lord. You will see him in his glory in a fresh and dynamic way and count it all joy to be his disciple in this world.

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