

“to the end of the earth”



A Study of Luke-Acts

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Introduction

Why Luke-Acts?

It is generally accepted by scholars that Luke wrote both the gospel that bears his name and the book of the Acts of the Apostles. The structure and language of these books are very similar and they are both addressed to a man named Theophilus. Acts 1:1 refers to "the former account" (Luke).

The book of Luke is a *gospel*, or an account of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ (the word gospel literally means "good news"). The book of Acts is a *history* of the beginning and growth of the early church. When studied consecutively, one gets a broad view of this crucial time in history, the time when God sent His Son to save man (Gal. 4:4). When finished with the study, you will know who Jesus, what His mission was and all about the church He established. This will provide a valuable background to future bible studies, whether Old Testament or New.

The main approach we will be using in this study is simply to read what God has said in His word, with a minimum of extraneous comment. It is our conviction that God's word can be understood and applied by every person. While there may be some difficulties in understanding some of the details, the main message will be clear if the book is given a fair reading.

Everyone comes to the bible with a set of presuppositions, some of which have long since been recorded in our minds and are not easily erased. Many of these assumptions are undoubtedly true. But others may be false, perhaps products of teaching or upbringing, but not biblical truth. For example, most people would claim absolutely that Jesus was born on December 25th and that the bible teaches us to observe "Christmas." Yet the bible is silent about the day of Christ's birth and "Christmas" is an invention of man (look up "Christmas" in almost any bible dictionary).

Holding on to presuppositions, even when they contradict clear bible teaching, is fatal to a comprehension of the bible because if we are unwilling to accept the truth, wherever it leads, we can never please God (Hebrews 11:6; Romans 10:17).

As beneficial as it might be, however, it is probably not realistic to insist that we eliminate all our biases before reading the bible. A more reasonable suggestion, perhaps, is simply to realize that we do have some presuppositions and that they are probably affecting our understanding of the bible. Admitting the presence of our presuppositions (and thus the influence they have on our thinking) is almost as helpful as not having them.

So, let's "clear the decks" and give God's word a chance to direct our lives according to His will. We find it easiest to accept the word of God after we make the decision to submit completely to Him: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Proverbs 9:10).

Study Plan

We will study Luke-Acts according to the following schedule. Notice that the reading is broken up into thirteen sections. If you study one section per week, you will be able to complete the material in one quarter. You may, of course, choose to take the study at a more leisurely pace.

In each lesson, you'll be asked to read a particular section of the text and then answer questions relating to that material. The questions will help you focus on the important themes and concepts which are developed throughout the two books. Do not hesitate to share your thoughts and questions with your study partner. We're all here to learn.

LUKE

- A. Preface and the Birth of Jesus and the Ministry of John the Baptizer [1:1 - 2:52]
- B. The Beginning of Jesus' Public Ministry [3:1 - 4:13]
- C. The Ministry in and around Galilee [4:14 - 9:50]
- D. From Galilee to Jerusalem [9:51 - 13:21]
- E. The Ministry in and around Perea [13:22 - 19:27]
- F. Jesus' Last Days in Jerusalem: Sacrifice and Victory [19:28 - 24:53]

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Note that each block of readings end with a similar statement (see 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:31). There is an outline statement in 1:8, referring to the place that the gospel would be preached and 1:1-2:41 is introductory matter. 2:42-47 introduces the entire first block ("H" in the

outline below). Luke's purpose was not to provide a biography of Peter or Paul, but to record the birth of the church and growth of the gospel in the world.

G. Introduction [1:1 - 2:41]

H. The Church at Jerusalem [2:42 - 6:7]

I. Critical Events in the Lives of Three Pivotal Figures [6:8 - 9:31]

J. The Gospel in Palestine and Syria [9:32 - 12:24]

K. Paul's First Journey and the Jerusalem Council [12:25 - 15:35]

L. Paul's Second and Third Journeys [15:36 - 20:38]

M. Paul's Journeys to Jerusalem and Rome [21:1 - 28:31]

Lesson #1: Luke

A. Preface and the Birth of Jesus and the Ministry of John the Baptizer

Please Read Luke 1:1 - 2:52 and answer the following questions:

1. What was the purpose of Luke's writing? [1:1-4]
2. Who was Zechariah and what happened to him? [1:5-23]
3. Who was John the Baptizer and what was his mission? [1:13-17]
4. Who visited Mary and what was his message? [1:26-37]
5. How did Mary respond? [1:38-56]
6. What was unique about Mary's pregnancy? [1:34] Where is it prophesied about in the OT?
7. At what point was Zechariah able to speak again? [1:57-66]
8. What do you think it means when some of these people are said to be "filled with the Holy Spirit"? What did they do? [1:41, 67; see 2:25ff.]
9. Describe the birth of Jesus and the events which followed. [2:1-39]
10. What was Christ's mission on earth? [2:11-14, 25-38]

Think About It. . .

Does it seem as though God planned for the Salvation of man from the beginning? (See Ephesians 1:4).

Lesson #2: Luke

B. The Beginning of Jesus' Public Ministry

Please read 3:1 - 4:13 and answer the following questions.

1. What nation was in power when Jesus began His teaching? [3:1]
2. What was the nature of the message John the baptizer was preaching? [3:3-14]
3. What was John's function? [3:15-18]
4. What act preceded the public ministry of Jesus? What happened during it? [3:21-22]
5. Who tempted Jesus while He was in the wilderness and what does the temptation tell us about Jesus [4:1-14; see Heb. 4:15].

Think About It. . .

Read Mt. 3:13-17, a parallel passage about the baptism of Jesus. Jesus is recorded as saying that He was being baptized in order to "fulfill all righteousness." What does that mean to you?

We need help in times of temptation. Jesus, by undergoing all the temptations common to man, is able to help us. How?

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Lesson #3: Luke

C. The Ministry in and around Galilee

Please read Luke 4:14 - 9:50 and answer the following questions.

1. Explain how the words which Jesus read from Isaiah applied to Him [4:16-21]
2. To what group of people did Jesus preach during His public ministry?
3. Notice the reaction of the people recorded in 4:22, 32, 36. What was different about the teaching of Jesus?
4. What is the “kingdom of God”? [4:43]
5. What was involved in preaching the kingdom of God? [Chapter 5]
6. Summarize Jesus’ sermon, recorded in Lk 6:2-49.
7. What characteristic of the Centurion impressed Jesus so much? [7:1-10]
8. Thus far in the record, what has been true result of the miracles which Jesus has performed? [For example, see 7:16].
9. In the parable of the sower [8:4-18], what kind of people are represented as “good ground”?
10. What is a “disciple”? What is required to be a disciple of Jesus? [9:18-25; 57-62]

Think About It...

Jesus taught with authority. Think about the various “authorities” we accept in life - our government, our police force, our laws. What or who should be our authority in religion?

Read Mt. 16:18-20. Jesus said He would build His church. What is a “church”? How was He going to build it? Was it, perhaps, through the teaching of the kingdom of God?

Faith was something that Jesus considered very important, as borne out by His reaction to the Centurion. How would you define faith? Do you think you have it?

Why did Jesus do miracles? If they were to help people believe in Jesus and His teaching, what purpose would they serve today?

What kind of "ground" are you?

Do you think you'd like to be a disciple of Jesus, even in light of the demands of discipleship? Do you think it would be worth it? Do you think there is a difference between being a disciple and being a Christian? (Read Acts 11:26)

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Lesson #4: Luke

D. From Galilee to Jerusalem

Please read Luke 9:51 - 13:21 and answer the following questions.

1. Who wanted to call “fire down from heaven” to destroy the Samaritans? Why? [9:51-56]
2. How did Jesus describe the cost of following Him? [9:57-62]
3. Jesus sent out ___ men two-by-two into every city. What were they to preach? [10:1-16]
4. Review your understanding of the term, “the kingdom of heaven.” [10:9, 11]
5. Why were the Seventy rejoicing when they came back from their mission? [10:17]
6. Jesus told them that they should rejoice over something else - what?
7. In what sense has God “hidden things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes?” [10:21; cf. I Cor. 1:18ff.]
8. Jesus taught the parable of the good Samaritan in response to a question from a lawyer. What was the lawyer's attitude? [10:25-37]
9. Analyze the “Lord's Prayer” [11:1-4; see Mt. 6:9-13]. What did Jesus teach about prayer?
10. An important principle is developed out of the confrontation recorded in 11:14-28. What essential lessons does this event and Jesus' response teach us?
11. We talked earlier about the “good and honest heart” which Jesus discusses in the parable of the sower. What is the opposite of such a heart? [11:29-12:3]
12. What is “confession”? [12:8-9; see Rom. 10:9-13].
13. What is more important than riches? [12:13-34].
14. Christ is the “Prince of Peace” yet He says that His coming will cause division. Why?

Think About It. . .

Would knowing that your name was written in the "Book of Life" cause you to rejoice?

How might we "test" Jesus, like the lawyer did? What kind of attitude should we have instead?

Have you ever confessed Christ before men? What is the alternative to confession?

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Lesson #5: Luke

E. The Ministry in and around Perea

Please read Luke 13:22 - 19:27 and answer the following questions.

1. Some people teach “pluralism,” meaning that anyone who believes in God will be saved, regardless of what other doctrine they believe or reject. Looking at 13:22-27, do you think Jesus taught such a doctrine? If not, what did He teach? (Cf. Mt. 7:13-14, 21-23).
2. “Jerusalem” (the Jews) had rejected Jesus as the promised Messiah. But how did Jesus feel toward Jerusalem and how did He express these feelings? [13:34-35]
3. Why did Jesus ask the Pharisees whether it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath? What was their response and what does it prove? [14:1-6]
4. When you are invited to a banquet, what “seat” are you to seek? Why?
5. Who is invited to participate in the kingdom of heaven? Who is most likely to come? [14:15-24]
6. If we are going to follow Jesus, what kind of attitude must we have and what should we do first? [14:25-33].
7. Read again Luke 15. This is a chapter which we might call the “lost and found.” What was lost and what was found and what was the reaction in each case when that which was lost was found?
8. In the parable of the unjust steward [16:1-11], the master commended him for something. What was it and why? What is the point of the parable (remember that parables generally have only one major point)?

9. We, as humans, take a certain view of things and make certain assessments regarding their value. How does God regard the things which we hold dear? [16:14-15].
10. After reading the story of the rich man and Lazarus, do you think a person will have an opportunity to repent after he dies? [16:19-31]
11. How forgiving is a disciple of Jesus to be? [17:4]
12. What is the proper attitude of a disciple toward his duty to Jesus? [17:5-10]
13. Describe why a disposition of gratitude is important to discipleship and pleasing to God. [17:11-19]
14. From 17:20-21, describe the nature of the kingdom of God - what is it, where is it?
15. Study the parable of the persistent widow and discuss what it teaches about the importance and fervency of prayer. Especially note the statement found in verse 8 regarding faith. [18:1-8]
16. What does it mean to receive the kingdom "as a little child"? [18:17; cf. Mt. 18:1-5]
17. Why did Jesus tell the rich young ruler to sell all he had? Why didn't he obey Jesus? What is Jesus teaching us?
18. What does 18:31 tell us about fulfillment of prophecy? (Cf. 24:44)
19. What did Zacchaeus do to earn the commendation of Jesus? [19:1-10]
20. To what extent will we be held responsible for what we have been given? [19:11-27]

Think About It. . .

Do you think it is possible for all so-called "Christian" religions to be right in the sight of God? How does God feel about division?

Have you ever lost anything important? How did you feel when you found it? How do you suppose God feels when a sinner returns to Him?

Do you think much about the brevity of life and what follows? In what sense was there a great "reversal in the lives of the rich man and Lazarus?"

What does it mean to be "justified" [18:14]? Have you ever been justified by God?

Are you impressed with the fact that so many prophecies about Jesus came true?

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Lesson #6: Luke

F. Jesus' Last Days in Jerusalem: Sacrifice and Victory

Please read 19:28 - 24:53 and answer the following questions.

1. What is the significance of Jesus coming into Jerusalem on the foal of a donkey? How was He received? [19:28-40].
2. Jesus again was touched by the sight of Jerusalem. What did He do as He drew near and what did He do when He arrived at the temple? In both cases, discuss why He reacted as He did. [19:41-48]
3. The Jews immediately questioned the authority of Jesus to “cleanse” the temple. What is “authority”? How did Jesus respond to their questions, and what does it tell us about His view of His authority? [20:1-8]
4. Who are the “vinedressers” in the parable? [20:9-19]
5. Christ is the “chief cornerstone” of what? [20:17; cf. Eph. 2:20; I Pet. 2:6]
6. How did Jesus handle the attempts by the Jewish religious establishment to trap Him? What does this tell us about His authority?
7. The Sadducees were a Jewish sect who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. They asked Jesus a lengthy question about it [20:27-40]. How did Jesus respond and what does it teach us about the resurrection?

8. What do we learn about the demands of discipleship from the widow who put all her living in the treasury? [21:1-4]
9. Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70, about 40 years after Jesus spoke the words found in chapter 21. What was Jesus' purpose in speaking these words?
10. Who betrayed Christ? [22:1-6]
11. What memorial was instituted, recorded in chapter 22, and why? [Cf. I Cor. 11:23-29]
12. Who did Jesus predict would deny Him three times? [22:31-34]
13. Describe the experience of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. Why do you suppose He was so distressed, since He knew that He would be raised from the dead? [22:39-46]
14. From other sources we learn that the Jews violated at least 13 of their own laws when they arrested Jesus. Why were they so intent on killing Him?
15. What was the charge against Jesus that the Jews presented to Pilate? [23:2] Compare the charge with what Jesus said in 20:20-26. What were the Jews doing?
16. Describe the actions of Pilate and Herod as they attempted to please the people and still uphold some semblance of the Roman law. [23:6-25]
17. Describe the crucifixion, as Luke describes it. Why do you suppose there isn't there more detail about the agony of the death itself? What's the point in telling this story? [23:32-49]
18. Who first discovered that Jesus had been raised from the dead? [24:1-12] What did they do?

19. To how many people did Jesus eventually appear? [See I Cor. 15:1-8] Why is this fact important? Why is the resurrection so important to Christians?

20. Luke records a relatively long account about two disciples on the road to Emmaus. What lessons do we learn from the exchange between them and Jesus? What kind of attitude did they have? [24:13-35]

21. How did Jesus appear to the disciples and how did He prove His resurrection? What is the significance of His asking for something to eat? [24:36-43]

22. What did Jesus tell the disciples to do and where were they to begin? [24:44-49].

Think About It. . .

Did you notice that the preaching of Jesus caused one of two reactions - either anger (rejection) or joy (acceptance). Why?

Of how many churches is Christ the "chief cornerstone"?

How often should we commemorate the death of Christ? (Cf. Acts 20:7)

What does the death, burial and resurrection of Christ mean to you personally? Why did Jesus undergo such terrible suffering?