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# LUKE

VOLUME 2:  
9:51-24:53

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God. Jesus is praised by a priest, a humble virgin, shepherds, and a prophet and prophetess at the temple. These people, all of whom are portrayed as walking with God, have high expectations of Jesus. Only the word of Simeon to Mary gives an ominous ring. The old man notes that Jesus will be "a light for revelation to the nations and glory of your people Israel" (Luke 2:32). In fact, however, Jesus will also be a cause of grief for Mary and division in Israel (Luke 2:34-35). Jesus is the "salvation" of God (Luke 2:30), but in the midst of hope is the reality that fulfillment comes mixed with pain.

Jesus' own self-awareness concludes the introductory overture of the Gospel (Luke 2:41-52). Here the young boy declares that he must be about the work of his Father in the temple. Jesus notes his unique relationship to God and his association with God's presence and teaching.

This section, dominated by OT allusions, opens the Gospel with notes of fulfillment and God's direction—emphases that continue through the entire Gospel. John and Jesus are placed side by side in the pericopes of Luke 1; then Jesus has the stage in Luke 2. The structure imitates the theology of forerunner-fulfillment.

### *Preparation for Ministry: Anointed by God (3:1-4:13)*

John and Jesus remain side by side in the next section on Jesus' ministry. John is the "one who goes before" (Isa. 40:3-5; Luke 3:1-6), while Jesus is the "one who comes" (Luke 3:15-17). Unlike Matthew and Mark, Luke lengthens his citation of Isa. 40 to make the point that salvation is seen by all people. Only Luke contains a section where the ethical dimensions of John's call to repentance in terms of response to others are made clear (Luke 3:10-14). John warns about judgment, calls for repentance, and promises the coming of one who brings God's Spirit. John baptizes Jesus, but the main feature of the baptism is the first of two heavenly testimonies to Jesus (Luke 3:21-22). John had promised that Jesus would bring the Spirit, but here Jesus is anointed with the Spirit. The first hints of fulfillment are here. The heavenly testimony calls Jesus the "beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." This fusion of Isa. 42 and Ps. 2 marks out Jesus as a regal, prophetic figure, who as a chosen servant of God brings God's revelation and salvation. The universal character of Jesus' relationship to humans is highlighted in the list of his ancestors (Luke 3:23-38). He is "son of Adam, son of God." His first actions are to overcome temptations from Satan (Luke 4:1-13), something Adam had failed to do. So the section shows Jesus as anointed by God, representative of humans, and faithful to God.

### Structure and Argument

Luke's Gospel breaks down nicely into largely geographical divisions (the full outline is printed at the end of this introduction):

- I. Luke's preface and the introduction of John and Jesus (1:1-2:52)
- II. Preparation for ministry: anointed by God (3:1-4:13)
- III. Galilean ministry: revelation of Jesus (4:14-9:50)
- IV. Jerusalem journey: Jewish rejection and the new way (9:51-19:44)
- V. Jerusalem: the Innocent One slain and raised (19:45-24:53)

The argument of Luke's Gospel emerges as one proceeds through it in literary order. With the basic structure and argument of the book in place, its major theological points can be examined. The most sensitive works that concentrate on the literary argument of Luke are those by Talbert (1982), Tiede (1988), and L. Johnson (1991: 3-24), while Tannehill (1986) treats the themes of Luke topically with a literary emphasis.

### *Luke's Preface and the Introduction of John and Jesus (1:1-2:52)*

After a crucial preface in which Luke explains his task, the author launches into a unique comparison of John the Baptist and Jesus that shows how both represent the fulfillment of promises made by God. John is like Elijah (Luke 1:17), but Jesus has Davidic roles to fulfill and possesses a unique supernatural origin (Luke 1:31-35). John is forerunner, but Jesus is fulfillment. Everything in Luke 1-2 points to the superiority of Jesus.

Mary's hymn (Luke 1:46-56) praises the faithfulness of God to his promise and his blessing of those who are humble before him, setting up a major Lucan theme. Zechariah reiterates the hope in national, Davidic terms and sets forth the superior relationship of Jesus to John (Luke 1:67-79). In doing so, Zechariah links spiritual promises and national promises to Davidic hope.

Jesus' birth takes place in humble circumstances, but all the figures surrounding his birth are pious and responsive to the hope of

<sup>9</sup> For more details on the relationships of the various textual families, see Holmes 1983 and Metzger 1992.

### *Galilean Ministry: Revelation of Jesus (4:14–9:50)*

Jesus' teaching and miracles dominate the third section of Luke's Gospel. Major teaching blocks include his synagogue declaration of the fulfillment of God's promise (Luke 4:16–30) and the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:17–49). Elements unique to Luke are that the synagogue speech represents Jesus' self-description of his mission, while the sermon represents his fundamental ethic presented without the concerns related to Jewish tradition. The section's fundamental issue is, "Who is Jesus?" The unit pictures the growth of faith that comes to those whom Jesus gathers around himself. Their discovery is the vehicle that Luke uses to answer the question of Jesus' identity. Jesus follows their response with the first discussion of the hard road of discipleship. Following Jesus is full of blessing, but it is not easy.

In the synagogue speech (Luke 4:16–30), Jesus raises the note of fulfillment through the appeal to Isa. 61:1–2 and 58:6. He says that the anointing of God promised in Isa. 61 is fulfilled today. In the context of Luke, the anointing looks back to the anointing with the Spirit in Luke 3. Thus, the appeal to Isaiah is not just to the picture of a prophet, as allusions to Elijah and Elisha suggest, but it also asserts Jesus' regal role. He will bring salvation to all those in need: poor, blind, and captive. Rejection will be met with the taking of the message to others, an indirect allusion to the inclusion of Gentiles. The mission's scope is summarized here.

Luke 4–9 juxtaposes Jesus' gathering of disciples and the raising of opposition. Jesus' ability to bring salvation is pictured in a series of miracles (Luke 4:31–44), while disciples are called to be fishers of people (Luke 5:1–11). The first hints of official opposition come with the miracles of divineline authority, when the Son of Man claims to be able to forgive sins and heals on the Sabbath (Luke 5:12–26). Levi, a hated tax gatherer, is called (Luke 5:27–28), and four controversies emerge, one of which involves the type of company Jesus keeps, while the others center on the Sabbath (Luke 5:29–6:11). Jesus gives a mission statement: his task is to call sinners to repentance (Luke 5:32). His authority is such that to do good is the real issue of the Sabbath (Luke 6:5, 9).

Jesus organizes the disciples and issues a call. The Twelve are chosen (Luke 6:12–16). Then Jesus offers blessing to the humble and poor, while warning the rich and oppressive (Luke 6:20–26). His Sermon on the Plain is a call to love others in the context of accountability to God. One is to respect the authority of Jesus' teaching and respond with obedience (Luke 6:27–49).

Luke 7:1–8:3 concentrates on "who is Jesus?" and the appropriate response to him. A Gentile centurion understands faith better

than do those in the nation (Luke 7:1–10). The crowd believes Jesus is a prophet (Luke 7:11–17). John the Baptist wonders if Jesus is the Coming One, probably because of Jesus' style of ministry. Jesus replies that his eschatological works of healing and preaching give the affirmative answer (Luke 7:18–35; Isa. 29:18; 35:5–6; 61:1). An exemplary faith is displayed by the woman who anoints Jesus and by those women who contribute to his ministry (Luke 7:36–8:3).

Jesus can be trusted. With the parable of the seed and the image of the Word as light, a call is made to trust God and his Word, as revealed by Jesus (Luke 8:4–21). Jesus then shows his authority over nature (Luke 8:22–25), demons (Luke 8:26–39), disease and death (Luke 8:40–56). He sends out a mission of proclamation of the kingdom (Luke 9:1–6), as word about him reaches as far as Herod (Luke 9:7–9). The picture of Jesus' ability to provide comes in the multiplication of loaves (Luke 9:10–17).

This section moves from teaching and demonstration of authority to confession and call to discipleship. Peter confesses Jesus to be the Christ (Luke 9:18–20). Now Jesus explains what kind of Messiah he will be; he will suffer (Luke 9:21–22). Those who follow him must have total commitment in order to survive the path of rejection that comes with following Jesus (Luke 9:23–27). The second heavenly testimony to Jesus comes at the transfiguration (Luke 9:28–36). The divine voice repeats the endorsement made at the baptism with one key addition, the call to "listen to him" (Deut. 18:15). Jesus is a second Moses, who marks out a new way. This section closes with the disciples failing, showing their need for Jesus to instruct them. Jesus issues calls to trust and be humble, two basic characteristics of discipleship (Luke 9:37–50).

### *Jerusalem Journey: Jewish Rejection and the New Way (9:51–19:44)*

As much as 49 percent of the fourth section contains material unique to Luke. There is a high concentration of teaching and parable. In fact, seventeen parables are in this unit, fifteen of which are unique to Luke. The "journey" is not a chronological, straight-line journey, since Jesus in Luke 10:38–42 is near Jerusalem, while later in the section, he is back in the north. Rather it is a journey in time, in the context of the necessity of God's plan. Journey notes dot the section (Luke 9:51; 13:22; 17:11; 18:31; 19:28, 41) as Jesus travels to meet his appointed fate in Jerusalem (Luke 13:31–35). The section's thrust is that Jesus gives a new way to follow God, which is not the way of the Jewish leadership. The theme is "listen to him." So this section discusses how Jesus' teaching relates to current Judaism. Jesus fulfills the promise and is the way, but his way is distinct from

