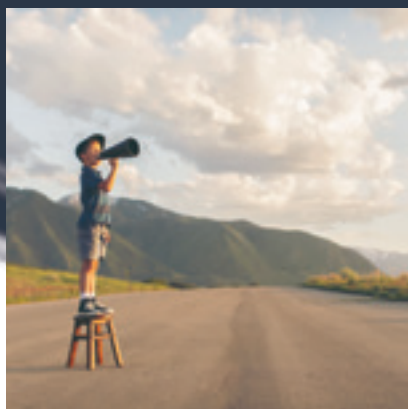


LUKE 1-9

LUKE 1-9

GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY



9 INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDIES FOR
SMALL GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS



INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDIES

LUKE 1-9

LUKE 1-9

GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY

9 INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDIES FOR
SMALL GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS

DES SMITH

 **matthiasmedia**
SYDNEY • YOUNGSTOWN

Good News of Great Joy
© Des Smith 2023

All rights reserved. Except as may be permitted by the Copyright Act, no part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means without prior permission from the publisher. Please direct all copyright enquiries and permission requests to the publisher.

Matthias Media
(St Matthias Press Ltd ACN 067 558 365)
Email: info@matthiasmedia.com.au
Internet: www.matthiasmedia.com.au
Please visit our website for current postal and telephone contact information.

Matthias Media (USA)
Email: sales@matthiasmedia.com
Internet: www.matthiasmedia.com
Please visit our website for current postal and telephone contact information.

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. The ESV text may not be quoted in any publication made available to the public by a Creative Commons licence. The ESV may not be translated into any other language.

ISBN 978 1 925424 98 0

Cover design and typesetting by Lankshear Design.

» CONTENTS

How to make the most of these studies	5
STUDY 1: An orderly account [Luke 1]	9
STUDY 2: Sovereign, Saviour, Son [Luke 2]	17
STUDY 3: Hope for humanity [Luke 3:1-4:13]	25
STUDY 4: Freedom for all [Luke 4:14-44]	33
STUDY 5: Disciples and anti-disciples [Luke 5:1-6:16]	41
STUDY 6: The cost of discipleship [Luke 6:17-49]	51
STUDY 7: Who Jesus is: trustworthy [Luke 7]	59
STUDY 8: What Jesus has: power [Luke 8]	69
STUDY 9: The king must die [Luke 9:1-51]	77

» HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF THESE STUDIES

1. What is an Interactive Bible Study?

Interactive Bible Studies are a bit like a guided tour of a famous city. They take you through a particular part of the Bible, helping you to know where to start, pointing out things along the way, suggesting avenues for further exploration, and making sure that you know how to get home. Like any good tour, the real purpose is to allow you to go exploring for yourself—to dive in, have a good look around, and discover for yourself the riches that God's word has in store.

In other words, these studies aim to provide stimulation and input and point you in the right direction, while leaving you to do plenty of the exploration and discovery yourself.

We hope that these studies will stimulate lots of 'interaction'—interaction with the Bible, with the things we've written, with your own current thoughts and attitudes, with other people as you discuss them, and with God as you talk to him about it all.

2. The format

The studies contain five main components:

- sections of text that introduce, inform, summarize and challenge
- numbered questions that help you examine the passage and think through its meaning
- sidebars that provide extra bits of background or optional extra study ideas, especially regarding other relevant parts of the Bible
- ‘Implications’ sections that help you think about what the passage means for you and your life today
- suggestions for thanksgiving and prayer as you close.

3. How to use these studies on your own

- Before you begin, pray that God would open your eyes to what he is saying in the Bible, and give you the spiritual strength to do something about it.
- Work through the study, reading the text, answering the questions about the Bible passage, and exploring the sidebars as you have time.
- Resist the temptation to skip over the ‘Implications’ and ‘Give thanks and pray’ sections at the end. It is important that we not only hear and understand God’s word, but also respond to it. These closing sections help us do that.
- Take what opportunities you can to talk to others about what you’ve learned.

4. How to use these studies in a small group

- Much of the above applies to group study as well. The studies are suitable for structured Bible study or cell groups, as well as for more informal pairs and triplets. Get together with a friend or friends and work through them at your own pace; use them as the basis for regular Bible study with your spouse. You don’t need the formal structure of a ‘group’ to gain maximum benefit.

- For small groups, it is *very useful* if group members can work through the study themselves *before* the group meets. The group discussion can take place comfortably in an hour (depending on how sidetracked you get!) if all the members have done some work in advance.
- The role of the group leader is to direct the course of the discussion and to try to draw the threads together at the end. This will mean a little extra preparation—underlining the sections of text to emphasize and read out loud, working out which questions are worth concentrating on, and being sure of the main thrust of the study. Leaders will also probably want to work out approximately how long they'd like to spend on each part.
- If your group members usually don't work through the study in advance, it's extra important that the leader prepares which parts to concentrate on, and which parts to glide past more quickly. In particular, the leader will need to select which of the 'Implications' to focus on.
- We haven't included an 'answer guide' to the questions in the studies. This is a deliberate move. We want to give you a guided tour of the Bible, not a lecture. There is more than enough in the text we have written and the questions we have asked to point you in what we think is the right direction. The rest is up to you.

5. Bible translation

We quote from and refer to the English Standard Version, which we recommend. There should not generally be any problems, however, if you are using a different translation (though it might be useful to have an ESV on hand in case of any confusion).

» STUDY 1

AN ORDERLY ACCOUNT

[LUKE 1]

A mission of salvation

LET'S NOT MINCE WORDS: LUKE'S Gospel is long. In fact, it makes up about one-eighth of the New Testament. When you finish reading this Gospel, you really have achieved something special! That's why we're going to take it slowly: this volume is the first in a planned series of four sets of studies which will take us through the entire Gospel from beginning to end.

But Luke's Gospel isn't just long; it's also *wonderful*. It's a rich portrait of Jesus in all his passion, power and humility.

Most of all, it's about his determination to *save us from everything that hurts us*: sin, death, suffering and the forces of evil. As Jesus himself succinctly sums up his mission: "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (19:10).

So where to begin on this epic journey? At the beginning, of course!

To make it as easy as possible for us to get our bearings, Luke—our guide to Jesus' life—has written a wonderfully clear introduction to tell us exactly what his book will be about.

Read Luke 1:1-4.

1. What does Luke tell us this book will be?

2. How did he write it? What were his sources?

3. Whom did he write it for?

4. Why did he write it?

A book of history and certainty

LUKE TELLS US HIS BOOK will be “an orderly account” (v3) of “the things that have been accomplished among us” (v1). Though Luke doesn’t tell us immediately what these “things” are, it will soon (in the very next verses, in fact) become clear that he means the life and times of the historical figure Jesus of Nazareth. First and foremost, this will be a book of history, not a book of philosophy or moral instruction.

But it won’t just be a book of “things” about Jesus, but about “the things that have been *accomplished among us*” by Jesus. That is, Luke sees that Jesus’ life didn’t just occur in a vacuum; it fulfilled promises and expectations that came long before him. As such, we as readers are being told to watch out for how Jesus’ life fulfils things, especially the expectations of the Old Testament.

What’s more, it’s not just an “account”; it’s an “*orderly account*” (v 3). This biography won’t cover everything Jesus ever did—how could it, even being as long as it is—but it will be carefully structured, and it will have a point and a purpose. It is driving towards a goal, and this goal will shape Luke’s selection of material.

Luke never met Jesus, but he did interview many people who met Jesus, especially those who were Jesus’ servants and eyewitnesses “from the beginning” (v 2) and hence knew him best. This is not a book of second- and third-hand tales, but a carefully researched piece of history and biography written by a man who’s done his homework. As such, it presents itself as a reliable source of information about Jesus.

The book was addressed to someone called Theophilus. We know very little about this man, given that he is mentioned in only one other place in Scripture: the very beginning of Acts, Luke’s sequel to this Gospel, which was also addressed to Theophilus (Acts 1:1). His name literally means ‘Lover of God’, which may suggest that he was a fellow believer in Jesus who wanted to know more about him—in particular, the certainty of the things he had already been taught. The fact that Luke addresses

Who wrote this book?

The name ‘Luke’ doesn’t appear anywhere in this book, but for various reasons we know that Luke wrote Acts, and that Acts is the sequel to Luke. Hence we can conclude that Luke wrote the Gospel bearing his name.

We know he was a friend and ‘fellow worker’ of the Apostle Paul (Phlm 23–24). In fact, he must have been a close friend of Paul’s, as he was the only one to stick with him during his final days (2 Tim 4:9–11). We also know that he was a doctor (Col 4:14). Though this is only mentioned once, it explains some other features of his work. His Greek is sophisticated, clearly the work of an educated man. At times, he displays the outlook of a doctor—for example, when Matthew, Mark and Luke all record the same story of a sick woman, Matthew and Mark simply say that she had a “fever” (Matt 8:14; Mark 1:30), whereas Luke records the detail that she had a “high fever” (Luke 4:38).

Luke was probably a Gentile (a non-Jew). In Colossians 4:10–11, Paul passes on greetings from three men, “the only men of the circumcision [i.e. Jews] among my fellow workers”, but then goes on in verses 12–14 to share the greetings of three other men, one of whom is Luke. This makes sense of the ‘Gentile-friendly’ nature of Luke’s Gospel.

him as “most excellent Theophilus” (v3) suggests that he was a man of high social standing, perhaps a Roman official (see Acts 24:2, 26:25). He may even have been the financial patron supporting Luke’s writing ministry. While Luke says he wrote “for ... Theophilus”, it’s almost certain that he intended a much wider group of people to read the fruits of his research.

This brings us to our final point: Why was this book written? Luke tells us that he writes to give his readers “certainty” about the things they have been taught. Theophilus, and we, may have been

taught lots of things about Jesus. But how does he—and how do we—know that they’re true? That’s why Luke wrote his book: to give us “certainty concerning the things you have been taught” (v 4). He does so by providing “an orderly account” of “the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us” (vv 1-2).

So what were the first things that Jesus fulfilled among us? Let’s take a look.

Read Malachi 4:5-6.

5. What does Malachi say will happen?

Read Luke 1:5-25, 57-80.

6. What promise does God make to Zechariah through the angel Gabriel? How is this a fulfilment of Malachi 4:5-6 (see Luke 1:16-17)?

7. How is this promise fulfilled?

The coming of 'Elijah'

THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHET Malachi, writing 400 years before Jesus, says that one day the Lord will come, but that before this happens he will send the prophet Elijah. When Elijah comes, he “will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers” (Mal 4:6). In other words, he will reconcile people to each other—and, in doing so, to God—because that is what God wants.

Luke’s Gospel then opens with a promise that a childless couple, Zechariah and Elizabeth, will have a son who will be the ‘Elijah’ that Malachi prophesied about. “In the spirit and power of Elijah”, he will “turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just”. He will do all this “to make ready for the Lord a people prepared” (Luke 1:17)—just as Malachi said he would.

Luke has said he will write us an account of the things fulfilled (or “accomplished”) among us, and here is the first of those things fulfilled: the coming of the herald of the Lord.

But the Lord hasn’t yet come. That’s next.

When was this book written?

The fact that many accounts of Jesus’ life had already been written by the time Luke wrote his (1:1) indicates the passage of some time, perhaps even several decades. Most scholars think Luke was written in the mid-60s AD, about 30 years after Jesus’ death, resurrection and ascension. This relatively short timeframe gives us confidence about the reliability of the account—for example, because many eyewitnesses would still have been alive for Luke to consult.

Read 2 Samuel 7:5, 11b–14a.

8. What promises does God make to David?

Read Luke 1:26–56.

9. What promise does God make to Mary through Gabriel?

10. How will this be a fulfilment of 2 Samuel 7?

God's forever king

IN 2 SAMUEL 7, GOD TELLS DAVID, via the prophet Nathan, that he will make one of his descendants a king whose rule will last “forever” (v13) and whose relationship with God will be so close that “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son” (v14).

Around one thousand years later, God tells Mary, via the angel Gabriel, that she will give birth to this king:

“He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.

And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” (Luke 1:32-33)

This is all part of Luke’s account of the things accomplished and fulfilled in the coming of God’s forever king, whose name will be Jesus (v 31). He is ‘the Lord’, the one for whom ‘Elijah’—John the Baptist—will prepare the way.

» Implications

(Choose one or more of the following to think about further or to discuss in your group.)

- A non-believing friend of yours declares: "The Gospels were just stories made up by four bored men in a pub". How do you respond?

- What are some of the questions you still have about the reliability of Jesus' claims? What areas of your faith do you hope to have made more certain by reading Luke?

-
- Luke and Malachi have said that in order to be ready for the coming of the Lord, we must have our hearts prepared and we must be repentant. As you get ready to meet the Lord Jesus in Luke, how might you be preparing your heart in repentance?

 - Samuel said that God would one day send a king to rule forever, and Luke has said that Jesus is that king. How can we, like Mary, magnify the Lord and rejoice in God our Saviour (Luke 1:46-47) at this news?

» Give thanks and pray

- Thank God that we can have confidence in our faith in Jesus because it is based on the evidence of history, not 'blind faith'.
 - Pray that by reading Luke's Gospel you will increasingly know the certainty of the things you have been taught.
-