

R.C. SPROUL

THE SON OF MAN

CAME TO

SEEK AND TO SAVE

THE LOST

LUKE

LUKE: AN EXPOSITIONAL COMMENTARY

“R.C. Sproul,’ someone said to me in the 1970s, ‘is the finest communicator in the Reformed world.’ Now, four decades later, his skills honed by long practice, his understanding deepened by years of prayer, meditation, and testing (as Martin Luther counseled), R.C. shares the fruit of what became perhaps his greatest love: feeding and nourishing his own congregation at St. Andrew’s from the Word of God and building them up in faith and fellowship and in Christian living and serving. Dr. Sproul’s expositional commentaries have all R.C.’s hallmarks: clarity and liveliness, humor and pathos, always expressed in application to the mind, will, and affections. R.C.’s ability to focus on ‘the big picture,’ his genius of never saying too much, leaving his hearers satisfied yet wanting more, never making the Word dull, are all present in these expositions. They are his gift to the wider church. May they nourish God’s people well and serve as models of the kind of ministry for which we continue to hunger.”

—Dr. Sinclair B. Ferguson
Teaching Fellow
Ligonier Ministries

“Dr. R.C. Sproul, well known as a master theologian and extraordinary communicator, showed that he was a powerful, insightful, helpful expository preacher. This collection of sermons is of great value for churches and Christians everywhere.”

—Dr. W. Robert Godfrey
President emeritus and professor of church history emeritus
Westminster Seminary California, Escondido, California

“I tell my students again and again, ‘You need to buy good commentaries and do so with some discernment.’ Among them there must be preacher’s commentaries, for not all commentaries are the same. Some may tell you what the text means but provide little help in answering the question, ‘How do I preach this text?’ Dr. R.C. Sproul was a legend in our time. His preaching held us in awe for half a century, and these pages represent the fruit of his exposition at the very peak of his abilities and insights. Dr. Sproul’s expositional commentary series represents Reformed theology on fire, delivered from a pastor’s heart in a vibrant congregation. Essential reading.”

—Dr. Derek W.H. Thomas
Senior minister
First Presbyterian Church, Columbia, South Carolina

“Dr. R.C. Sproul was the premier theologian of our day, an extraordinary instrument in the hand of the Lord. Possessed with penetrating insight into the text of Scripture, Dr. Sproul was a gifted expositor and world-class teacher, endowed with a strategic grasp and command of the inspired Word. When he stepped into the pulpit of St. Andrew’s and committed himself to the weekly discipline of biblical exposition, this noted preacher demonstrated a rare ability to explicate and apply God’s Word. I wholeheartedly recommend Dr. Sproul’s expositional commentaries to all who long to know the truth better and experience it more deeply in a life-changing fashion. Here is an indispensable tool for digging deeper into God’s Word. This is a must-read for every Christian.”

—Dr. Steven J. Lawson
Founder and president
OnePassion Ministries, Dallas

“How exciting! Thousands of us have long been indebted to Dr. R.C. Sproul the teacher, and now, through Dr. Sproul’s expositional commentaries, we are indebted to Sproul the preacher, whose sermons are thoroughly biblical, soundly doctrinal, warmly practical, and wonderfully readable. Sproul masterfully presents us with the ‘big picture’ of each pericope in a dignified yet conversational style that accentuates the glory of God and meets the real needs of sinful people like us. This series of volumes is an absolute must for every Reformed preacher and church member who yearns to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ Jesus. I predict that Sproul’s pulpit ministry in written form will do for Christians in the twenty-first century what Martyn Lloyd-Jones’ sermonic commentaries did for us last century. *Tolle lege*, and buy these volumes for your friends.”

—Dr. Joel R. Beeke
President and professor of systematic theology and homiletics
Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan

LUKE

AN EXPOSITIONAL COMMENTARY

LUKE

AN EXPOSITIONAL COMMENTARY

R.C. SPROUL

Luke: An Expository Commentary
© 2020 by the R.C. Sproul Trust

Published by Reformation Trust Publishing
a division of Ligonier Ministries
421 Ligonier Court, Sanford, FL 32771
Ligonier.org ReformationTrust.com

Printed in China
RR Donnelley
0000820
First edition

ISBN 978-1-64289-281-9 (Hardcover)
ISBN 978-1-64289-282-6 (ePub)
ISBN 978-1-64289-283-3 (Kindle)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without the prior written permission of the publisher, Reformation Trust Publishing. The only exception is brief quotations in published reviews.

Cover design: Ligonier Creative
Interior typeset: Katherine Lloyd, The DESK

Unless otherwise noted, 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.

Scripture quotations marked NKJV are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked KJV are from the King James Version. Public domain.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Sproul, R. C. (Robert Charles), 1939-2017, author.
Title: Luke : an expository commentary / R.C. Sproul.
Description: First edition. | Orlando, FL : Reformation Trust Publishing, a division of Ligonier Ministries, 2020. | Includes index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2020008038 (print) | LCCN 2020008039 (ebook) | ISBN 9781642892819 (hardback) | ISBN 9781642892826 (epub) | ISBN 9781642892833 (kindle edition)
Subjects: LCSH: Bible. Luke--Commentaries.
Classification: LCC BS2595.53 .S77 2021 (print) | LCC BS2595.53 (ebook) | DDC 226.4/07--dc23
LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020008038>
LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020008039>

CONTENTS

Series Preface	xi
1. An Orderly Account (Luke 1:1–4)	1
2. The Angel and Zechariah, Part 1 (1:5–12)	5
3. The Angel and Zechariah, Part 2 (1:13–25)	9
4. The Annunciation (1:26–38)	19
5. Mary’s Visit to Elizabeth (1:39–45)	27
6. The Magnificat (1:46–56)	33
7. The Birth of John (1:57–66)	41
8. The Benedictus (1:67–80)	43
9. The Birth of Jesus (2:1–20)	55
10. The Song of Simeon (2:21–38)	61
11. Jesus in the Temple (2:39–52)	67
12. John the Baptist (3:1–6)	75
13. John Preaches (3:7–20)	81
14. The Baptism of Jesus (3:21–22)	87
15. The Genealogy of Jesus (3:23–38)	93
16. The Temptation of Jesus (4:1–13)	99
17. Jesus in the Synagogue (4:14–30)	105
18. Jesus Meets a Demon (4:31–37)	113
19. Healing and Preaching (4:38–41)	117
20. The Gospel of the Kingdom (4:42–44)	123
21. The Catch of Fish (5:1–11)	129
22. Healing of the Leper (5:12–16)	135
23. The Authority to Forgive (5:17–26)	141
24. The Call of Levi (5:27–32)	147
25. New Wineskins (5:33–39)	151
26. Jesus as Lord of the Sabbath (6:1–5)	157
27. The Man with the Withered Hand (6:6–11)	163
28. The Twelve Apostles, Part 1 (6:12–16)	165

29. The Twelve Apostles, Part 2 (6:12–16)	173
30. The Beatitudes (6:17–23)	179
31. Blessings and Curses (6:21–26)	183
32. Love Your Enemies (6:27–36)	187
33. Judge Not . . . (6:37–42)	191
34. Good and Bad Fruit (6:43–45)	197
35. Build on the Rock (6:46–49)	201
36. The Centurion's Servant (7:1–10)	205
37. The Widow's Son (7:11–17)	211
38. John the Baptist (7:18–35)	215
39. The Forgiven Woman (7:36–50)	223
40. The Parable of the Sower (8:1–15)	227
41. The Parable of the Lamp (8:16–21)	233
42. The Calming of the Storm (8:22–25)	237
43. Legion (8:26–39)	243
44. Jairus' Daughter (8:40–56)	249
45. The Sending of the Twelve (9:1–6)	255
46. Haunted by Guilt (9:7–9)	259
47. The Feeding of the Five Thousand (9:10–17)	265
48. Peter's Confession and Ours (9:18–27)	271
49. The Transfiguration (9:28–36)	277
50. The Greatest (9:37–48)	283
51. Discipleship (9:49–62)	289
52. The Mission of the Seventy-Two (10:1–20)	295
53. The Return of the Seventy-Two (10:21–24)	301
54. The Parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25–37)	307
55. Martha and Mary (10:38–42)	313
56. A Simple Way to Pray (11:1–4)	317
57. Asking and Knocking (11:5–13)	323
58. A House Divided (11:14–26)	329
59. Seeking a Sign (11:27–36)	335
60. Woe to the Hypocrites (11:37–54)	341
61. Fearing God (12:1–7)	347
62. The Unforgivable Sin (12:8–12)	353
63. The Parable of the Rich Fool (12:13–21)	357
64. The End of Anxiety (12:22–34)	361
65. The Faithful Servant (12:35–48)	367
66. The Dividing Christ (12:49–59)	371
67. The Locus of Astonishment (13:1–5)	377

68. The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree (13:6–9)	381
69. A Little Leaven (13:10–21)	385
70. The Narrow Way (13:22–35)	389
71. The Way of Humility (14:1–14)	395
72. The Parable of the Great Supper (14:15–24)	401
73. The Cost of Discipleship (14:25–35)	405
74. The Lost Found (15:1–10)	409
75. The Lost Son (15:11–32)	413
76. The Parable of the Unjust Steward (16:1–13)	421
77. Pressing into the Kingdom (16:14–18)	427
78. The Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19–31)	433
79. Unprofitable Servants (17:1–10)	437
80. Cleansing of the Lepers (17:11–19)	441
81. The Kingdom Come (17:20–37)	445
82. The Unjust Judge (18:1–8)	453
83. The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (18:9–14)	457
84. Let the Children Come (18:15–17)	461
85. The Rich Young Ruler (18:18–30)	465
86. The Blind Man (18:31–43)	469
87. Zacchaeus (19:1–10)	473
88. The Parable of the Minas (19:11–27)	477
89. The Triumphal Entry (19:28–40)	483
90. Jesus Weeps over Jerusalem (19:41–48)	487
91. Jesus' Authority and the Parable of the Tenants (20:1–18)	493
92. Render unto Caesar (20:19–26)	499
93. The Resurrection and David's Son (20:27–47)	503
94. The Destruction of Jerusalem (21:1–24)	509
95. This Generation Will Not Pass Away (21:25–38)	513
96. Betrayed (22:1–6)	519
97. The Lord's Supper (22:7–23)	525
98. Peter's Denial (22:24–34, 54–62)	531
99. Jesus at Gethsemane (22:35–46)	535
100. The Arrest of Jesus (22:47–53)	541
101. Jesus before the Sanhedrin (22:63–71)	543
102. Jesus on Trial (23:1–25)	547
103. The Crucifixion, Part 1 (23:26–31)	553
104. The Crucifixion, Part 2 (23:32–43)	557
105. Jesus Dies (23:44–49)	563
106. The Burial (23:50–56)	569

107. The Resurrection (24:1–12)	573
108. The Road to Emmaus (24:13–35)	575
109. Jesus Appears (24:36–53)	581
Index of Names	589
About the Author	595

SERIES PREFACE

When God called me into full-time Christian ministry, He called me to the academy. I was trained and ordained to a ministry of teaching, and the majority of my adult life has been devoted to preparing young men for the Christian ministry and to trying to bridge the gap between seminary and Sunday school through various means under the aegis of Ligonier Ministries.

Then, in 1997, God did something I never anticipated: He placed me in the position of preaching weekly as a leader of a congregation of His people—St. Andrew’s in Sanford, Florida. Over the past twelve years, as I have opened the Word of God on a weekly basis for these dear saints, I have come to love the task of the local minister. Though my role as a teacher continues, I am eternally grateful to God that He saw fit to place me in this new ministry, the ministry of a preacher.

Very early in my tenure with St. Andrew’s, I determined that I should adopt the ancient Christian practice of *lectio continua*, “continuous expositions,” in my preaching. This method of preaching verse-by-verse through books of the Bible (rather than choosing a new topic each week) has been attested throughout church history as the one approach that ensures believers hear the full counsel of God. Therefore, I began preaching lengthy series of messages at St. Andrew’s, eventually working my way through several biblical books in a practice that continues to the present day.

Previously, I had taught through books of the Bible in various settings, including Sunday school classes, Bible studies, and audio and video teaching series for Ligonier Ministries. But now I found myself appealing not so much to the minds of my hearers but to both their minds and their hearts. I knew that I was responsible as a preacher to clearly explain God’s Word *and* to show how we ought to live in light of it. I sought to fulfill both tasks as I ascended the St. Andrew’s pulpit each week.

What you hold in your hand, then, is a written record of my preaching labors amidst my beloved Sanford congregation. The dear saints who sit under

my preaching encouraged me to give my sermons a broader hearing. To that end, the chapters that follow were adapted from a sermon series I preached at St. Andrew's.

Please be aware that this book is part of a broader series of books containing adaptations of my St. Andrew's sermons. This book, like all the others in the series, will *not* give you the fullest possible insight into each and every verse in this biblical book. Though I sought to at least touch on each verse, I focused on the key themes and ideas that comprised the "big picture" of each passage I covered. Therefore, I urge you to use this book as an overview and introduction.

I pray that you will be as blessed in reading this material as I was in preaching it.

—R.C. Sproul
Lake Mary, Florida
April 2009

1

AN ORDERLY ACCOUNT

Luke 1:1–4



Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative 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, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

Luke is mentioned in several places in the New Testament, not the least of which is in his own book of Acts where he served as a companion to the Apostle Paul in his missionary journeys. Luke was not only a doctor but also a missionary, a medical missionary who was a close companion and friend of the Apostle to the Gentiles, Saul of Tarsus. Luke was born and raised in Antioch, was of Gentile descent, and died in his eighties in a peaceful manner, unlike most of the other writers of the biblical narratives and epistles.

When I was last in Rome, we made a special visit to the Mamertine Prison where the Apostle Paul endured his second and final Roman imprisonment before his execution under that emperor, Nero, whose nickname was “the Beast.” The holding cell was situated across the street from the Roman forum. It was not a large prison but simply a large cistern that had been cut out of the rock

and originally had been used to keep a supply of water for the Romans. But, as history would have it, it was emptied of water and turned into a cell for those who were about to be executed. It was a moving experience to go down the stairs into that cistern, that dank, dark, cold, wet place where the great Apostle was held, and presumably there wrote his final letter to Timothy, whom he had left behind in Ephesus. In that epistle, Paul writes these final words:

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

Do your best to come to me soon. For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments. (4:6–13)

He goes on to say in verses 17–18:

But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

The last admonition to Timothy, in the New King James Version, is “Do your utmost to come before winter” (2 Tim. 4:21). In 2 Timothy 4, Paul essentially tells Timothy, “Come before winter, bring the parchments, bring my coat, and bring Mark because I am alone except for the Lord and for the beloved physician Luke.”

Luke the Historian

The last statement of the Apostle Paul speaks volumes about his companion who went with him on his missionary journeys and stood next to Paul in all the trials and tribulations that are recorded in the book of Acts. Most significantly, Luke stood side by side with Paul in that dreadful, dank prison cell. All the rest

had departed or fled. Luke, we know, was a physician and a missionary. But most importantly, Luke has emerged as one of the most important, if not the most important, historians of the ancient world.

As we look back at how he begins his Gospel, he acknowledges at the outset that others had taken time to give a narrative account of the things they knew of the person and work of Jesus. We have, survived to this day, the inspired writings of Matthew, Mark, and John. But, presumably besides those Gospel writers, there were others in the first century who tried their hand at writing a summary of the history of Jesus.

Luke acknowledges that at the beginning and makes it clear that he is aware that others have gone before him in this venture of providing a history. And so he says, **Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative 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). Of course, Matthew and John were disciples. Mark was not one of the Twelve, but he was considered to be the amanuensis, or the secretary, of the Apostle Peter. Also, Luke was not a disciple, but he had been converted by the Apostles and had come under the tutelage of the great Apostle Paul.

So much of what Luke knows he gains from his association with Paul as well as with the others who were among the first disciples. This is those who, from the beginning, were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word. Luke is saying, “I am not an eyewitness, but I am a historian, and as a historian, I check the sources.” Luke gives us more information about the birth of Jesus than anybody else, and it’s with almost total certainty that we know Luke had the privilege of interviewing Mary, the mother of Christ. Luke said, “After we have received these from the eyewitnesses, it seemed good to me also, having had a complete understanding of all the things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus.”

There is a lot of conjecture about the one who is addressed here and also in the book of Acts. The name Theophilus means “friend or lover of God.” Some argue that the person who is mentioned here represents, in a certain way, “Christian everyman,” that there was no actual Theophilus. It seems, however, that Luke is addressing and dedicating this volume, as was commonplace in the ancient world, to a person of noble position. He is devoting or dedicating this to a man by the name of Theophilus because he calls him **most excellent Theophilus** (v. 3), which was a title given not to symbolic characters but rather to real historical persons.

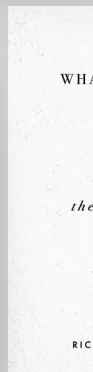
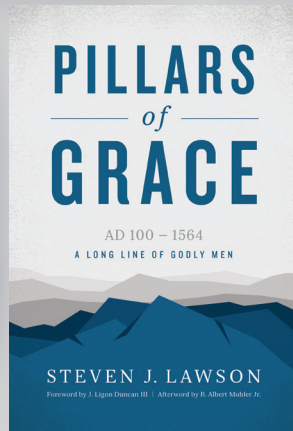
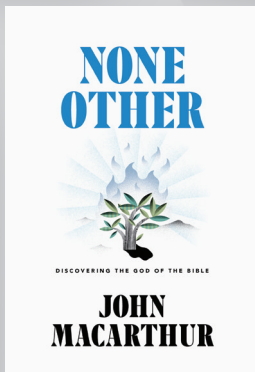
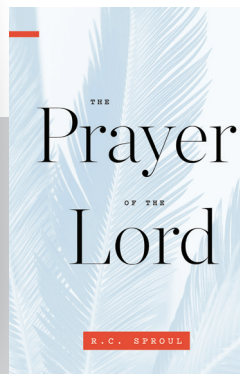
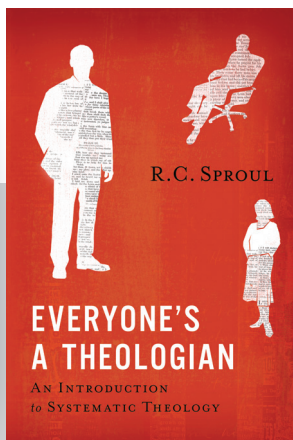
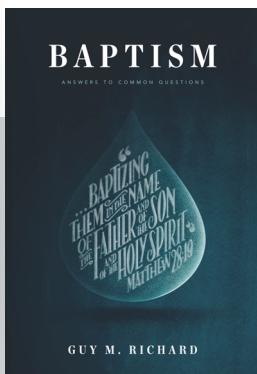
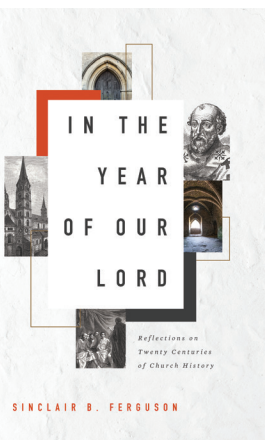
Luke goes on to say the reason he’s writing is **that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught** (v. 4). That was his burden, and

that was his passion: “I am writing these things down that you can be sure that the things that you have heard, the things that have been preached, and the things that have been declared to you by eyewitnesses are available in an orderly, historical, and carefully documented account. I do this to strengthen your faith, to give you certitude, and so that you can have the full assurance of the truth of the gospel.” That was Luke’s task as a historian.

The ancient world had many notable historians, both Roman and Greek, and Jewish as well. You have the historians Thucydides, Xenophon, Herodotus, Suetonius, Tacitus, Pliny, and the Jewish historian Josephus, all of whose works are still read. I have a collection in my house of all the works of the great Greek historians, and there were many. And they were excellent in the work they did. But no historian of the ancient world has been subjected to as much academic and archaeological scrutiny as Luke, the writer of this Gospel.

Historians have sometimes been skeptical about the biblical writers, and in the early part of the twentieth century, a British atheist historian, William Mitchell Ramsay, set out to debunk the truth claims of the Gospels. He decided to follow the alleged footsteps of the Apostle Paul throughout his missionary journeys, going to all those places that the archaeologists have examined. Dr. Ramsay was converted to Christianity along the way, because he discovered that every time a spade of dirt was turned over in those days, some historical aspect of the Gospels was verified and authenticated. Ramsay and other secular historians have said that Luke, apart from inspiration, apart from the divine assistance that he enjoyed, was the most accurate historian of the entire ancient world.

We publish books that proclaim the historic Christian faith to new generations. *These are books you can trust.*



Order your copy of this title, download the ebook version, or browse our entire collection at ReformationTrust.com.

Jesus, Savior of the Lost

Can we know what Jesus was truly like during His time on earth? A first-century physician set out to gather eyewitness testimony of the life, teaching, and ministry of Jesus Christ. The result is a close-up account of a compassionate Savior on His journey to redeem His people. In this volume, Dr. R.C. Sproul traces the record of Jesus' life as told by Luke, the man considered by some to be one of the greatest historians of the ancient world. Dr. Sproul shows that this gospel is for believers and skeptics alike, written so "that you may have certainty" (Luke 1:4) about the Son of Man who came to seek and save the lost.

Dr. Sproul's expositional commentaries help you understand key theological themes and apply them to all areas of your life. Drawn from decades of careful study and delivered from a pastor's heart, these sermons are readable, practical, and thoroughly Bible-centered. Here is your opportunity to learn from a trusted teacher and theologian as he leads you through God's Word and shares his perspective on living faithfully for God's glory. This is a series to serve pastors, small groups, and growing Christians who want to know the Bible better.

R.C. Sproul was founder of Ligonier Ministries, founding pastor of Saint Andrew's Chapel in Sanford, Fla., and first president of Reformation Bible College. He was author of more than one hundred books, including The Holiness of God.



Reformation Trust



RELIGION / Biblical Commentary / New Testament