



The Treasure

ANCIENT STORY EVER NEW OF JESUS
AND HIS CHURCH

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An Adventure through Luke

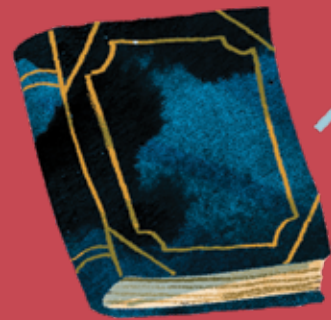
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BOOK ONE

An Adventure
through the
Gospel of Luke



The Discovery

Once upon a time, on the Greek Island of Naxos, two children finished their morning chores and ran down to the sea.

Theos took a deep breath of salty sea air, as he and his sister, Mira, sought stones to throw.

Mira picked up two that lay side by side. "Here you go," she said, offering one to her brother.

Theos held the stone, turning it in his hand to find the best grip. He felt the warmth of

the sun on the back of his neck as it rose above Mt. Zeus behind him.

"Let's see who can hit the water!" Mira shouted as she launched her stone. She watched it soar as the sea waves crashed against the rocky coast. Her rock fell short, clacking down into the boulders below. Theos welcomed the challenge. He ran forward to the edge of the grass and launched his stone with all his might.

The rock sailed toward the sea and almost made it to the water. But as chance would

have it, a sudden gust of wind returned it to shore. The stone fell short of the waves and dropped into the boulders below. It landed with a loud pop, crack, and tinkle of broken pieces. The seagulls soaring along the coast, squawked.

"Did you hear that?" asked Theos.
"I think it hit something!"

"Let's go see," replied Mira as she scrambled down the boulders. Theos followed. The smell of shellfish and seaweed wafted up from the damp rocks.

Theos scanned the area and spotted a clay jar, the size of a small barrel, wedged between two boulders, the bottom half covered by sand. "There!" Theos shouted, "Straight ahead. My stone struck a jar!" He pointed to a black hole the size of an orange, atop the vessel.





“Look,” Mira said. “There’s something written on it.” She could see letters covered in sand.

Mira dug away at the sand. “*Pronoia Thalassa*,” she read aloud. “I think it’s a name. It looks like an old water jar.”

“*Providence of the Sea*,” Theos said, translating the name in English. Then he reached down to put his hand into the jar.

“Theo!” Mira shouted. “What if there’s a snake in there?”

“Relax, Mira. The jar is sealed,” he said. “Look, it’s dry inside.” Then Theos knelt down and reached in, all the way up to his shoulder. “There is something in here,” he said. “Several pieces of paper, but I can’t grab hold of them.”

Theos pulled out his hand and then lifted a heavier rock with both hands above his head.

“Don’t break it,” Mira said.

“Too late for that,” Theos replied as he released the rock, which landed with a loud crash. Theos rolled the rock aside and cleared the larger broken pieces of clay. Then he retrieved two scrolls and passed one to Mira.

Mira unrolled the scroll.

Theos leaned over and read the script aloud, “The Gospel of Luke.” Then he opened the second scroll and read, “The Acts of the Apostles.”

“They are Bible scrolls,” Mira said. “They look old.” She lifted the scroll to her nose and drew in a whiff. “They smell old,” she added.

Theos reached back into the bottom of the jar and felt around. He grasped another object and retrieved a leather-bound book. His eyes opened wide, and he sat speechless as he read one word: *Treasure*.

Theos turned the cover for Mira to read.

"*The Treasure: Ancient Story Ever New of Jesus and His Church, 1910*," she read.

Theos opened the leather-bound journal and read the first page aloud:

Where it all began . . .

It is no small providence that I took aboard my father's trading ship, a man named Cristobal. I gave his missionary family free passage to Naxos. Soon after we set sail from the African coast, Cristobal introduced me to the gospel—a story from long ago, preserved upon two scrolls. Cristobal asked if he might read the scrolls to the crew each night after dinner. I did not like the idea, but when he told me the scrolls were written to a man who shared my name, Theophilus, I agreed.

The story of Jesus touched my heart and the lives of my crew. Upon our safe arrival in Naxos, he insisted I keep the scrolls as a gift. The following year, I studied these letters and realized my need for repentance.



Years before, I had taken my father's ship despite his objections. I had not been home in years. Now, convicted of my sin, I returned my father's ship to him. Like the prodigal son in the scroll, I confessed my sin to my father, and asked him to forgive me. Then I rejoined his business on the wharf. I continued serving him until a raging fire destroyed our business and took my father's life. I had nowhere to go, but Cristobal welcomed me into his home where I resumed my study of the scrolls. Now my days are short. Soon I will join my father, along with the great saints of old, worshiping the King before the throne.

To you who have discovered my bequest, I leave you the scrolls along with my journals. They record my study and include my personal illustrations.

Read each page carefully. I've placed questions for you along the way. Their answers will help you solve a riddle. Complete the riddle and you will find the location of my hidden treasure. Yes, there is a real treasure, which is yours for the taking.

Blessings on your quest,
Captain Theophilus Adamos
Providence of the Sea

"I've always dreamed of finding a hidden treasure," Theos said.

"Do you think it's real?" Mira asked.

"Of course!" Theos answered. "It says so right here!" He held the journal in the bright shining sun.

"So, what do we do now?"

"Follow the Captain's orders!" Theos replied. If we are to discover the treasure, we've got to read the scrolls and study his journal. Then we fill in the blanks to discover the clue. And that, will . . ."

"Lead us to the treasure!" shouted Mira and Theos together.

Further up the hill, a man and his dog stood watching. He turned to his dog and said, "That jar sat hidden for a long time, Salty." He stroked Salty's fur. "They found it on their own, without the help of the lost coin." Salty turned toward his master and let out a sharp bark.

"Yes, I do think we need to pay them a visit," the man said to Salty. "But let's give them a week or two to get into the story."

Salty barked again.

As Pastor Thomas walked along the path that led up the hill to a church, he said, "I never would have guessed they would find the jar on their own. Must be providence. The Captain would be pleased."


As the only pastor living in the area, Thomas watched over Theos and Mira's family. Since their father had passed away and they didn't attend church, Pastor Thomas often visited them and shared extra garden produce with them.

"The Lord loves that family," Pastor Thomas said as he walked toward home. Then he turned back to catch one last glimpse of the kids.

He watched as the two children topped the last rolling hill and disappeared from sight.

When Theos and Mira returned home, they climbed into the hayloft of the barn and carefully opened the scrolls. They read through them for most of the morning, trying to answer each question they encountered.





And now, dear reader,
it's your turn.



The very same book Theos and Mira discovered
in that old water jar, is now in your hands.
It comes not by chance, but by the hand of
providence. Read it alongside the gospel of
Luke and the book of Acts. Study its pages, and
you too will find the clues to solve the riddle.
The riddle will lead you to the treasure—
the treasure of Theophilus.

• PART ONE •

The Story Begins

The gospel of Luke was most likely written 30 to 40 years after Jesus lived on earth. Luke was not an original disciple of Jesus and likely never met him. Luke, a doctor, traveled with the apostle Paul—every so often the words “we” and “us” will appear in Acts, showing the author, Luke, was present [see Acts 16:10, for example]. Paul called Luke his “fellow worker” (Philemon 1:24) and “beloved physician”; also, he described Luke as well-loved (Colossians 4:14). The gospel of Luke and its sequel, the Acts of the Apostles, make up nearly one-third of the New Testament—more than all the writings of the apostle Paul combined.

Luke opens his gospel with a short note to a man named Theophilus, sharing how and why he wrote his gospel. He wants to share the story of Jesus. Luke begins with a detailed account of the events around the time of Jesus’s birth and childhood. Without Luke’s gospel, we wouldn’t know of the angels’ announcement to the shepherds, or that Jesus was born in a stable and laid in a manger. Luke is the only gospel writer to include these parts of the story.

We will begin our study of Luke by taking a closer look at these early stories. Study Luke’s gospel carefully and you will discover the key to eternal life.

Theophilus

Did you ever receive a card or letter in the mail? Before email and texting, people wrote letters to one another with paper and ink. Did you know that some of the books of the Bible are letters? The apostle Paul wrote to fellow workers, like Titus and Timothy, and to the churches he visited, like the one in Philippi. The letters were saved and carefully copied to share with others. Today, many of these letters are preserved in the Bible for us to read. The gospel of Luke is one of those letters, written to Luke's friend Theophilus.

Theophilus, whose Greek name means friend of God, lived when Christians were being arrested, beaten, and even killed. Luke wrote his friend to encourage him that Jesus's story was true and trustworthy.

Because Matthew and John were among the original twelve disciples of Jesus, their gospels



likely transpired naturally—like the telling of a familiar story. They simply wrote down what they remembered. But Luke was not among the original disciples. Thus, he had to do careful research and talk to the people who knew and followed Jesus—those who heard his teaching and watched him heal the sick and perform other miracles.

As you begin this study, replace the name *Theophilus* with your own name. For God made sure that Luke's letters were passed down through the ages for you to read, too!

The Birth of John

The longer you must wait for something special, the more excited you are when it finally arrives. We get excited for birthdays, holidays, and the start of summer vacation. Now just imagine how excited the people of Israel were to finally meet God's prophet!

The last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, ends with a prophecy that God would send the prophet Elijah. The prophecy says that God would use Elijah to "turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers" (Malachi 4:6). But four hundred years passed before God fulfilled that promise. That's a long time!

Luke tells us that God sent an angel to a man named Zechariah. The angel announced that Zechariah's wife, Elizabeth, would have a son, and they should name him John. God said that John would come in the "spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children" (Luke 1:17). After John's birth, Zechariah, through the Holy Spirit, prophesied that God would raise up a "horn of salvation" (Jesus) (v. 69), and Zechariah's son would grow up to be a prophet who would announce the coming of Jesus the Messiah (vv. 76–77). With that, the stage was set for God to fulfill another promise: the arrival of the promised Savior.



Some people thought Jesus was Elijah (Luke 9:19). But Jesus revealed that John the Baptist was the "Elijah" God had promised to send (Matthew 11:14).

A Son and a Savior

Have you ever been startled when someone sneaks up on you? Your whole body jolts with surprise! Imagine getting a sudden visit from an angel who appears out of nowhere! No wonder Mary was frightened when Gabriel appeared in her living room!

After calming her fears, Gabriel gave Mary the most amazing news. Even though she was not yet married, she would give birth to a son by the power of the Holy Spirit. The baby was to be given the name *Jesus*. Gabriel said Jesus would sit on the throne of his far-off grandfather David and rule as king forever. He would be called the Holy Son of God. As proof that nothing was impossible for God, Gabriel told Mary that her cousin Elizabeth, who had never been able to have a baby, was now six months pregnant. Mary agreed to God's plan, for she believed the angel. Then she went to visit Elizabeth.

As Mary walked through the door and greeted her cousin, she could see Elizabeth was pregnant, just as the angel had said. The baby inside Elizabeth leapt. The Holy Spirit filled Elizabeth and revealed that Mary was pregnant too! Elizabeth greeted Mary with a blessing.

Mary in turn praised God saying, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (Luke 1:46–47). Mary knew that God chose her to give birth to the Messiah who would be her Savior and fulfill God's promise to Abraham that through him all families on earth would be blessed (see Genesis 12:3). Mary's son Jesus later fulfilled that promise by dying on the cross and rising in victory over sin and death. People from every nation who turn from their sin and believe in Jesus, are blessed with forgiveness and welcomed into God's family.



The Christmas Story

People all around the world have different Christmas traditions. Children in Iceland set their boots on a windowsill to be filled with candy. In France, kids set their shoes near the fireplace. In the United States, people decorate trees with lights and hang up stockings. But all of this gift-giving at Christmas began with the very first Christmas gift—when God gave us his only Son Jesus to be born in Bethlehem.

Did you know that Luke is the only gospel writer to tell the Christmas story? Matthew records the visit of the wise men, but says they came later, after Jesus was already born (Matthew 2:1). The gospel of Luke is the only gospel to mention the census, no room in the inn, and the story of Mary giving birth in a stable. Luke is also the only gospel writer to report the angels visiting the shepherds and proclaiming,

"Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). Luke wanted everyone to know that Jesus is the Messiah God promised to send.

The angels gave Jesus three titles: Savior, Christ, and Lord. The name *Savior* means deliverer. It tells us that the baby has come to rescue and save. The name *Christ* means Messiah or God's chosen one—the one the prophets promised. The prophet Micah foretold of a great King who would shepherd God's people, Israel, and be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2–4). Jesus is the one Micah promised God would send. The name *Lord* means master, and tells us that Jesus has authority; he rules over all. When the shepherds told Mary the message given by the angels, she treasured it in her heart (Luke 2:19).

The Holy Spirit Working

Here is a riddle for you: You can't see me, but you can watch what I do. You can't touch me, but you feel when I come. Who am I? (The wind.) You can't see the wind, but you can watch it blow the leaves. You can't touch the wind, but you can feel its breeze. The Bible tells us the Holy Spirit is like the wind (John 3:8). You can't see the Holy Spirit, but you can experience his power.

More than any other gospel writer, Luke records the most about the Holy Spirit's work through Jesus. So far, Luke has reported that the Holy Spirit was with John the Baptist as a baby (Luke 1:15). He came upon Mary to conceive the baby Jesus (v. 35), filled Elizabeth at Mary's visit (v. 41), and filled Zechariah at the birth of his son (v. 67).

In today's story, Luke tells us that the Holy Spirit was at work again as Mary and Joseph brought the baby Jesus to the temple. The Holy

Spirit came upon Simeon (2:25) and promised him that he would see the "Lord's Christ" (v. 26). The name Christ means God's Anointed One, the promised Messiah. Then, on just the right day and at the right time, the Spirit of God led Simeon to the temple (v. 27) to speak a prophetic blessing over the baby Jesus.

When Simeon saw Jesus, he knew he was the Promised One. He took the baby in his arms and prayed a blessing. Simeon said that Jesus would bring salvation to Israel, and be a light to the Gentiles. Simeon gave a hint to the death of Jesus when he told Mary that a sword would also pierce her soul. How did he know these things? The Spirit of God revealed them to him.



Read Genesis 1:2 and you will see the Holy Spirit participating in the creation of the world.

My Father's House

If you've ever lost a parent in a crowded place, you know how scary it can feel. It's equally frightening for parents. Luke tells us that Mary and Joseph felt "great distress" when they realized twelve-year-old Jesus had been left behind in the bustling city of Jerusalem. They searched for three days before finding him in the temple. Imagine how upset Joseph and Mary must have been after searching all that time and not finding their son.

But did you notice that Jesus wasn't worried? His reply to Mary and Joseph in Luke 2:49 gives us a clue as to why he was so calm. Jesus said, "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" Mary and Joseph were upset because they could not find their son; they thought he was lost. But Jesus wasn't lost. He was in his Father's house. Even as a boy, Jesus knew that God was his Father.

Jesus also told his parents that he "must" be in his Father's house. This is a word we will see again and again in Luke's gospel. The word *must* tells us that the events in Jesus's life were not random. Jesus *must* be in his Father's house, he *must* preach the good news (Luke 4:43), and he *must* suffer, die, and be raised on the third day (9:22). Why? Because it is all a part of God's plan (Acts 2:23).

Live Like Jesus

After sharing the story of Jesus getting left behind at the temple, Luke gives us one final sentence about Jesus's childhood. He tells us that Jesus grew in wisdom, stature and favor with God and man.

Stature is a word that describes the way people see us, both inside and out. When we walk in wisdom, our stature grows, and when we act foolishly, it decreases. When you see the word stature, think of a statue of a tall warrior, wise and strong. When you study God's Word and make wise choices, you grow in stature.

As you do these things, you also grow in favor among God and man. David described God's favor like the protection of a shield in battle (Psalm 5:12). Growing in favor among people means that they welcome you, enjoy you, and are willing to help when you're in trouble.

So, live like Jesus. He studied God's Word and made wise choices based on what he learned. If you do the same, you will bless others and God will be your protection through every battle.



The best way to grow in wisdom is to read and study God's Word. That is what Jesus did when he remained back at the temple (Luke 2:46). The writer of Psalm 119 tells us, "Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are my constant guide" (v. 98 NLT).

CAPTAIN'S CLUE

SEARCH FOR THE ANSWER IN
LUKE PART ONE: THE STORY BEGINS

CLUE:

To find the missing word,
reread what you read.
But this time remember,
the word that I said.

If you study Luke's gospel carefully
you will s r the key to eternal life.

 s r is the first word of the riddle
you need to find my treasure.