

SHAPED BY SCRIPTURE

Who Do You Say I Am?

LUKE

DAN BOONE AND AMY BOONE

Copyright © 2022 by The Foundry Publishing®
The Foundry Publishing®
PO Box 419527
Kansas City, MO 64141
thefoundrypublishing.com

978-0-8341-4105-6

Printed in the
United States of America

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—for example, electronic, photocopy, recording—without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.



Cover and Interior Design: J. R. Caines
Layout: Jeff Gifford

All Scripture quotations, unless indicated, are taken from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

The internet addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers in this book are accurate at the time of publication. They are provided as a resource. The Foundry Publishing does not endorse them or vouch for their content or permanence.

10987654321

Contents

| | | |
|---|--|-----|
|  | Introduction to the <i>Shaped by Scripture</i> Series | 4 |
|  | Introduction to the Gospel of Luke | 7 |
|  | Week One: The Birth of Christ (Luke 2:1–40) | 12 |
|  | Week Two: Jesus Begins His Ministry (Luke 4:1–30) | 28 |
|  | Week Three: The Kingdom of God (Luke 6:17–26) | 44 |
|  | Week Four: The Teachings of Jesus (Luke 6:27–49) | 58 |
|  | Week Five: The Miracles of Jesus (Luke 8:22–39) | 72 |
|  | Week Six: The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) | 86 |
|  | Week Seven: The Resurrection of Jesus (Luke 24:13–35) | 100 |



Introduction

THE *SHAPED BY* *SCRIPTURE* SERIES

The first step of an organized study of the Bible is the selection of a biblical book, which is not always an easy task. Often people pick a book they are already familiar with, books they think will be easy to understand, or books that, according to popular opinion, seem to have more relevance to Christians today than other books of the Bible. However, it is important to recognize the truth that God's Word is not limited to just a few books. All the biblical books, both individually and collectively, communicate God's Word to us. As Paul affirms in 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." We interpret the term "God-breathed" to mean inspired by God. If Christians are going to take 2 Timothy 3:16 seriously, then we should all set the goal of encountering God's Word as communicated through all sixty-six books of the Bible.

4

By purchasing this volume, you have chosen to study the Gospel of Luke, which is one of four Gospels in the New Testament. The Gospels portray the life of Jesus in unique ways depending on their authors. The author of Matthew's Gospel is concerned with encouraging and instructing Jewish Christians in their adjusted religious lives. Mark's goal is to present Jesus as heroic and action-oriented, and to remind his readers that the powerful Son of God was also crucified. The author of John's Gospel is primarily concerned with presenting an enhanced vision of the salvation that is available to all through Jesus the Messiah, who was the true, incarnate Son of God. Luke's particular emphasis is on Jesus's interest in the socially marginalized, and on calling sinners and religious insiders to repentance. The goal of this series is to illustrate an appropriate method of studying the Bible, so this volume will focus on seven specific scenes and events from the life of Jesus as depicted by Luke, with the hope that the method modeled and practiced here will give you a useful way to engage further study.

How This Study Works

This Bible study is intended for a period of seven weeks. We have chosen a specific passage for each week's study. This study can be done individually or with a small group.

For individual study, we recommend a five-day study each week, following the guidelines given below:

1 On the first day of the study, read the relevant passage several times until you become fully familiar with the verses, words, and phrases.

2 On the second day, we will review the setting and organization of the passage.

3 On the third day, we will observe some of the realities portrayed in the passage.

4 On the fourth day, we will investigate the relationship of the individual passage to the larger story of God in the Bible.

5 On the fifth day, we will reflect on the function of the story as we hear it today, the invitation it extends to us, and our response to God, who speaks through God's Word.

If this Bible study is done as a group activity, we recommend that members of the group meet together on the sixth day to share and discuss what they have learned from God's Word and how it has transformed their lives.

You may want to have a study Bible to give you additional insights as we work through the Gospel of Luke. Other helpful resources are *Discovering the New Testament* and two volumes of *Luke: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition*, available from The Foundry Publishing.

Literary Forms in the Bible

There are several literary forms represented throughout the Bible. The divinely inspired writers used various techniques to communicate God's Word to their ancient audiences. The major literary forms (also known as genres) of the Bible are:

- narratives
- laws
- history
- Wisdom literature (in the form of dialogues and proverbial statements)
- poetry (consisting of poems of praise, lament, trust in God, and more)
- prophecy
- discourses
- parables
- miracle stories
- letters (also known as epistles)
- exhortations
- apocalyptic writings

Within each of these forms, one may find subgenres. Each volume in the *Shaped by Scripture* series will briefly overview the genres found in the book of the Bible that is the subject of that study.

When biblical writers utilized a particular literary form, they intended for it to have a specific effect on their audience. This concept can be understood by examining genres that are familiar to us in our contemporary setting. For example, novels that are comedies inspire good and happy feelings in their readers; tragedies, on the other hand, are meant to induce sorrow. What is true of the intended effect of literary forms in contemporary literature is also true of literary forms found in the Bible.

Introduction



THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Luke is the street-corner newsboy of the New Testament. And his Gospel is the news—the good news about Jesus. It’s an out-in-the-open, meant-for-everyone, come-and-get-it, read-all-about-it kind of news. It’s an expanded invitation. Luke’s Gospel takes stories and traditions and good news and puts them all where God has always intended—in the hands of *everyone*.

Who Wrote Luke?

Both external (outside the Bible) and internal (inside the Bible) evidence exists that allows us to name the author of the third Gospel in the New Testament as Luke. Though the name Luke does not appear in the Gospel, multiple early references outside the Bible directly or indirectly attribute the work to a physician named Luke. Additionally, references found elsewhere in the Bible point to Luke as a close companion of Paul. See, for example, Colossians 4:14, 2 Timothy 4:11, and Philemon 1:24, which all reference Luke.

7

While much of the content of Mark, Matthew, and Luke is similar, Luke’s perspective is unique as a physician and well-educated gentile. His profession leads us naturally to assume that he would hold himself to high standards with regard to research and writing. We expect Luke to uncover and record the stories of Christ with the thoroughness and attention of a doctor—someone who is interested in accuracy, care, and healing. Luke is a problem-solution writer. He sees the sin and brokenness of all of humanity, and he offers his stories as proof that Jesus is the solution.

Audience

Part of what makes Luke’s Gospel so beautiful, and part of why it resonates so strongly with us today, is that it carries the good news to a new audience—the non-Jewish people referred to as the gentiles. Luke says the message he is relaying is for everyone. The Jews no longer hold a monopoly on the good news; it is now available to all, in the form of the accessible letters and stories written by Luke and passed from hand to hand, circulating, spreading, reaching ever farther.

Literary Form

Luke's Gospel doesn't begin with the stories he has collected of Jesus. It begins by placing Jesus in the historic lineage of the Old Testament. The Jewish story starts with the Jews, but in the promise of Abraham, it extends to every tribe and nation. Luke will tell more of this story in his sequel to the Gospel, the Acts of the Apostles. We have hints of where this story is headed in the Gospel. His writing doesn't just nod to the Old Testament—it begins with it, rests on it, and now interprets it through the lens of Jesus Christ. This New Testament Gospel is not the beginning of a new story; it's the continuation of an old one: the great love story between Creator God and all of his creation.

Written late in the first century, probably around the year 80, Luke is one of three synoptic Gospels (Matthew and Mark being the other two). These three Gospels, particularly Luke and Matthew, have large chunks of material that are similar or even identical in wording, leading some to believe that a single source (possibly Mark) was used or referenced, and then expounded upon, in the writing of each Gospel. However, some of the more popular stories we know are found only in Luke: Gabriel's visit to Mary, the good Samaritan, the prodigal son, and Zacchaeus, among others. In all, there are fourteen parables that are unique to Luke's Gospel.

8 But how should we read Luke's Gospel? In any written work, it's important to consider the rhetorical methods of the writer. For Luke, the term "salvation" means more than being saved from sin. It is the liberation of people from disease, prejudice, poverty, sexism, religious judgment, and societal shame. With that in mind, we read his stories with the understanding that they were written to persuade readers to repent and turn to Christ. While it is a quasi-historical account addressed to Theophilus, it is more than an accurate reporting of the facts. It is good news that saves. Rhetorically, this Gospel is more like an infomercial than an encyclopedia. This understanding allows us to read Luke through a literary lens in which stories are shared specifically to affect and move readers, rather than a purely historical lens in which the sole purpose is factually accurate documentation.

A brief word should also be said about the companion volume to Luke, the Acts of the Apostles. Acts stands alone in the New Testament in a special way. It is like the four Gospels in telling stories of healings, teachings, demonic confrontations, opposition from enemies, imprisonments, and death. And it is like the epistles in visiting and addressing different cities with their named leaders, their local cultures, and their theological problems. Yet Acts is neither Gospel nor epistle. Similar to Luke, it is a theological narrative.

A narrative is a story. Stories cohere around characters who have experiences. Stories require a scaffolding of meaning. Stories need a setting with culture, language, and history. The more we understand the scaffolding around the story, the more we understand the story. We become insiders who share things in common with the characters in the story. The pure historian seeks to help people know what happened at a specific time and place. A historian's objectivity is important. They should seek to write without prejudice or opinion. They interview eyewitnesses, search documents, and look for evidence that fills in chronological blanks.

Luke is doing something different. He begins with the end in mind. He intends to influence his readers. In a sense, his work is more akin to a historical novel—a story that uses the historical setting and the facts but reorganizes them to serve the purpose of the narrative. He selects and arranges the events and tells them from his perspective. Luke becomes the omniscient narrator who is able to tell us the thoughts of the characters, put words into their mouths, and fill in the colors of their personalities. Even more important, Luke owns a theology, and he wants to persuade his readers to believe what he believes. His story is a theological narrative.

A good storyteller uses several devices. Repetition is one of them. There are connections between the stories of Luke and the stories of Acts. What we see Jesus do in Luke, we see the disciples repeat in Acts, from healings to casting out demons to confronting authorities to dying. Luke also repeats key words and phrases: boldness, signs and wonders, end of the earth, kingdom of God.

Another rhetorical device is the use of speeches made by the key characters. Jesus makes several speeches in Luke's Gospel in the form of parables, sermons, and responses to questions. Almost a third of Acts is speeches. The simple realities of papyrus, ink, and quill cause us to assume that no one was taking dictation when key speeches were made. But, similar to the Old Testament oral tradition, the early church recalled the sermons, sayings, and stories of Jesus until there was a fluid consensus about what he said.

Major Theological Themes

Woven into the twenty-four chapters of Luke's Gospel are several theological themes, including:



God is on a mission. Luke's Gospel is a prelude to Acts, a theological narrative that recounts the spread of the gospel and the transition of the people of God from a dominantly Jewish community to a mission that extends to the ends of the earth. We cannot achieve a multinational, multiethnic people of God without meeting the Jesus of Luke's Gospel. Luke wants us to know that God has always been going to the whole world, to all people, to the ends of the earth—and now God has become flesh through Jesus of Nazareth.



The kingdom of God is real and present on earth. The kingdom of God is a realm, a reality, a sphere, an environment that is filled with the uncontested presence of God. Theological geography is important here. We are not *down here* and the kingdom of God *way off up there*. We are here, and the kingdom is also here. It is not always visible, but sometimes it does break into the visible realm to make a dramatic difference. The kingdom of God has come among us in the person of Jesus Christ. He is here, and the kingdom is here in him.



The Holy Spirit is real and active. We find in Luke a robust theology of the work of the Holy Spirit. God is more than an ancient being who started things and then stepped back. The nature and intent of God are understood through the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit energizes Jesus in the Gospel of Luke. Divine power and presence are unleashed in him as a blessing to all people.



God has made an invitation, and the people are expected to respond. In Luke's Gospel, invitation comes in the form of God's redemption—that brokenness can be fixed. The diagnostic tone of Luke's theology should not surprise us. We should expect that a doctor would be concerned with healing. Luke has great hope that humans can be healed and redeemed. The call for repentance echoes throughout the Gospel, and we see the human response to that invitation: people repent and believe and follow.



Luke explores the relationship between vulnerability and hospitality. Many of the stories in Luke's Gospel portray people and situations of extreme vulnerability. Perhaps better than any of the other Gospel writers, Luke the physician understands human frailty. But Luke also demonstrates a keen ability to celebrate the hospitality of God through the welcome of Jesus. The excluded find a home in Luke's reversal-of-fortune stories. Luke invites us into his theological narrative just as we are and offers us the hospitality of God's kingdom.



Week One: The Birth of Christ

LUKE 2:1-40

We are vulnerable, and we know it. We have seen high-tech space shuttles disintegrate, skyscrapers collapse, stock markets plummet, marriages crumble, diseases spread, and countries at war. Any serious person who thinks about the way the world is and where it seems to be headed has reason to feel vulnerable. And we do all kinds of things to cope with our vulnerability, including overindulging in mindless entertainment that can make us numb to reality, or overscheduling ourselves to avoid serious thought, or over-insulating ourselves against potential risks and dangers. Instead of ignoring or avoiding our vulnerability, we should confront it by reading the story of Jesus's birth, which is filled to the brim with God's own vulnerability.

Luke's Gospel begins with the incarnation—the moment when God enters fully into our humanity and suffers with, for, and in us. It's a story of vulnerability. It is a moment when God leaves heaven to enter Mary's womb. As Luke's Gospel narrative unfolds and follows the story of Christ, we will be shown the full extent of this vulnerability, and perhaps it will help us come to grips with our own vulnerable state.

WEEK 1, DAY 1

Listen to the story in Luke 2:1–40 by reading it aloud several times until you become familiar with its verses, words, and phrases. Enjoy the experience of imagining the story in your mind, picturing each event as it unfolds.

WEEK 1, DAY 2

LUKE 2:1-40

The Setting

In Luke 1, we have seen the birth of John the Baptist to a barren Elizabeth and mute Zechariah. Similar to the story of Abraham and Sarah, God brings life to a dead womb. This is in character with the God who brings life from death and creates a future where there was none. John becomes the bearer of the news of the kingdom of God. The tender text of the visit between older Elizabeth, the best of old Israel, and betrothed Mary, the mother of the coming Messiah, is filled with hope and promise. In Mary's song (vv. 46-55) and Zechariah's prophecy (vv. 68-79), we hear the ancient hopes of Israel poured out as a prelude to the most-read story of Christmas—the Lukan account of Jesus's birth. Everything in Luke 1 has readied us for the announcement of the new King.

The Plot

14

God leaves heaven to enter the human womb. Surely he will pick a woman of great standing and stature, one who is respected in society and from a prominent family right? Nope. He chooses an ordinary young woman with no claim to fame. Okay, well at least he'll make sure to enter the world surrounded by people who will love him and bring acclaim to this momentous birth? Afraid not. Mary and Joseph and God-in-womb are at the mercy of strangers. They are completely reliant on others to provide the most basic of human needs. Surely at this point God will bring forth a rich citizen to set them up with the best birthing facility Bethlehem has to offer? Wrong again. The birth of Christ is stripped of all of the comforts and cares of home. God's first breath of human air likely contains scents of hay, animal poop, and damp earth.

The story of Jesus begins with a reliance on human hospitality. God has become us: Desperate. Needy. Flesh. Yet this vulnerable baby will grow up to meet the needs of all humanity. But there's something else we need to note here. In the story of the incarnation, the stars of the show are less than stellar: a woman who could be stoned for being pregnant by some means other than her husband, shepherds who are not trusted to bear public testimony, an aged widow who camps out in the temple like a beggar on a street holding up a "Jesus is coming soon" sign. The characters do not symbolize power and prestige. They reek of vulnerability. This is central to the Gospel of Luke. As he spreads the good news to those who have traditionally been outside of the promise, he reminds gentiles that Jesus knows what it's like to be an outsider, unwelcome, a misfit.

Summarize or paraphrase the general message or theme of each grouping of verses. Follow the pattern provided for Luke 2:1-3 and Luke 2:4-7.

1. Luke 2:1-3

A census is underway. Everyone is required to register for taxation in their ancestral home.

2. Luke 2:4-7

The census means Joseph will need to travel to his hometown of Bethlehem. Mary, his pregnant fiancée, travels with him. She goes into labor while they are in Bethlehem. But there is no place for them to stay, so their baby boy is born in a place meant for animals.

3. Luke 2:8-15

4. Luke 2:16-20

5. Luke 2:21-24

6. Luke 2:25 35

7. Luke 2:36 38

8. Luke 2:39 40

WEEK 1, DAY 3

What's Happening in the Story?

As we notice certain circumstances in the story, we will begin to see how they are similar to or different from the realities of our world. The story will become the lens through which we see the world in which we live today. In our study today, you may encounter words and/or phrases that are unfamiliar to you. Some of the particular words and translation choices for them have been explained in more detail in the **Word Study Notes**. If you are interested in even more help or detail, you can supplement this study with a Bible dictionary or other Bible study resource.

Luke 2:1–40 can be divided into three main sections: the account of Jesus's birth in verses 1–7, the response of shepherds and angels in verses 8–20, and Jesus's first trip to the temple in verses 21–40. **Jot down a summary description of the world and reality that is portrayed in the following verses. Follow the pattern provided for Luke 2:1–7 and Luke 2:21–40.**

1. Luke 2:1–7

Mary and Joseph travel from the town of Nazareth in Galilee, near the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, approximately eighty miles directly south to the town of Bethlehem in Judea. Mary and Joseph must make the trip as decreed by Emperor Caesar Augustus's Roman census to pay their taxes. Jesus is born in Bethlehem¹ and lies in a manger "because there is no room for them in the inn."²

WORD STUDY NOTES #1

¹This inconvenient and seemingly ill-timed trip fulfills the prophesy of Micah 5:2, "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

²We've tended to Americanize the setting of the nativity. We picture a rustic barn with wind whistling through slatted boards. But this might not be accurate. The landscape of Bethlehem is peppered with many, many cave formations. In many instances, family animals were kept in a nearby cave, which would provide natural protection. It is likely that a family's animal cave was the setting for Christ's birth.

WORD STUDY NOTES #2

¹ While most of us might think of “glory” as synonymous with a blinding light, a better translation of the word might be the sense of being overwhelmed. The Hebrew root of “glory” is related more closely to our concept of heaviness, or weightiness. To be in awe of God’s glory is to be overcome, weighed down, overwhelmed by his presence.

2. Luke 2:8–20¹

WORD STUDY NOTES #3

¹ The naming of Jesus, as instructed by the angel, is the use of the ancient name Yeshua, or Joshua, which denotes the hope that “God saves.” Jesus is named “the one who saves.”

² The offering of a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons is one of the hints we get about the economic status of the holy family. This is the sacrifice of a poor family.

³ Do not miss the connection between the naming of Jesus and the testimony of Simeon. He holds in his arms the baby who has just been named “the one who saves,” he recognizes the fulfillment of the Old Testament in the accompanying required sacrifice, and he responds by saying, “My eyes have seen God’s salvation.”

3. Luke 2:21–40

Mary and Joseph follow the customs of their day and faith, which include naming,¹ circumcision, dedication, and sacrifice.² These actions are expected of this young Jewish family. Then we meet Simeon, who has been waiting all his life to meet the promised Messiah. In fact, God has promised him that he won’t die until he sees him. Luke doesn’t give us many details about how the whole thing happens. We don’t know how Simeon knows Jesus is the Messiah. We only know that he follows the guidance of the Holy Spirit to go to the temple and that he recognizes Jesus as soon as he sees him.³ After Simeon, we meet Anna. Luke tells us four things about her: she is a prophet, she is old, she has been a widow for far longer than she was married, and she never leaves the temple. She sees the young family in the midst of their errand and, like Simeon, recognizes the Savior; preaching about him “to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.”

Discoveries

Let's summarize our discoveries from Luke 2:1-40.

1. Our understanding of Jesus must begin with the expectation of Israel. Jesus is born into their hope for a Messiah.
2. The incarnation of God occurs in human history. This account is not a fairy tale; it is rooted in a specific time and place. Kings and territories and taxes and towns are named. This is the real world that has experienced a divine invasion.
3. We can see the character of God in the way Jesus comes: bringing life from death, renewing old with new, working from the bottom of the social order, assuming vulnerability among dark powers.
4. This story ignites hope among those who encounter Jesus. But it also foreshadows the reality that suffering will be the path of God in the world.

WEEK 1, DAY 4

If you have a study Bible, it may have references in a margin, a middle column, or footnotes that point to other biblical texts. You may find it helpful in understanding how the whole story of God ties together to look up some of those other scriptures from time to time.

20

Jesus's Birth and the Story of God

Whenever we read a biblical text, it is important to ask how the particular text we're reading relates to the rest of the Bible.

Jesus's birth, like all other stories in the Bible, has an integral place in the story of God. Specifically, we see Luke connecting the birth of Jesus to the promises of the Old Testament and its prophets. Read the following verses and record how they relate to Luke's Gospel account.

1. Genesis 3:13-15

2. Psalm 2

6. Micah 5:2

Since Luke's Gospel is one of four in the New Testament, it's important to know how it aligns with and differs from the other texts of the same genre. Each of the four Gospels begins very differently. Read the following verses and note the way each writer chooses to start the story. Note the major themes, as well as any similarities or differences you find. You will also notice one non-Gospel text in this section. Read it and see what similarities you find between it and the other passages listed.

7. Matthew 1:18 2:18

8. Mark 1:1 8

WEEK 1, DAY 5

Luke and Our World Today

When we enter into the intriguing narrative of Luke 2:1-40, the story becomes the lens through which we see ourselves, our world, and God's action in our world today.

1. What does the story of Jesus's birth teach us?

The story of Christ's birth gives us a holy pattern to follow. As we live in community, we can be reminded that the Son of God came to this world in a way that addresses human need. Even in his birth, vulnerability and hospitality ebb and flow. As a vulnerable need rises to the surface, a hospitable act moves to meet it.

Following the above example, answer these questions about how we can understand ourselves, our world, and God's action in our world today.

2. Sometime, somewhere, the parade of wandering human need will come to your door. There will be those who need your resources, your space, your time, your help, your home. How do you typically respond when others need something from you?

3. How does it help you to remember that Jesus entered our world with great vulnerability of his own?

4. How do you attach value or worth to need?

5. Describe a time when you were in need. How did you rely on others during that time? How did others' responses affect you?

6. Where do we find vulnerability and hospitality in the stories of Simeon and Anna?
