**Luke I**

**The Upside Down Kingdom of God**

Theme: God’s salvation, as predicted by the prophets has arrived in the coming of the Messiah—Jesus of Nazareth. He is the savior of the world and this salvation is now spreading throughout the world (including that of the Gentiles, of course).

Theme verses: Luke 2:11 Today in the town of David as Savior has been born to you: he is the Messiah, the Lord.

Luke 19:9-10 Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost.”

The purpose of Luke is:

1. Assuring hearers/readers of the reality of what they have learned.

2. Calling them to continued faithfulness and participation in God’s salvation.

In Matthew Jesus fulfills the messianic expectation through fulfilling specific prophecies and prefigures. In Luke, Jesus fulfills the messianic pattern in his ministry and in bringing salvation today more than specific historical prophecies.

Features unique to Luke to note:

Historical details, including names, places and dates.

Universal appeal of the gospel (role of Gentiles in Jesus’ ministry)

Jesus’ concern for outsiders, the poor, “sinners”, women, Samaritans

Reversal of fortune (poor become rich, rich become poor, sinners are righteous and the “righteous” are sinners) The upside down kingdom of God

Emphasis on role of women in Jesus’ life and ministry

Jesus described as Savior (as well as Christ, Lord and Prophet) (as opposed to Messiah in Matthew and Son of God in John)

Narrative of the journey to Jerusalem (this theme is carried into Acts)

Jesus as a man of prayer (nine prayers of Jesus appear in Luke, of which only two are found in the other three gospels baptism 3:21, leprosy healing 5:16, before calling the Twelve 6:12, with his disciples in private 9:18, at the transfiguration 9:28, before teaching disciples to pray 11:1, prayer in view of trials 18:1, 21:36 22:40. Also, two of Jesus’ parables in Luke are about the need to pray (Luke 11:5-13, Luke 18:1-8])

Use of the word “today” in reference to salvation (rem: immediately in Mark?)

Emphasis on the Holy Spirit and its role in bringing in the Kingdom of God (1:15, 1:41-44, 1:67, 2:25-27, 3:22, 4:1,14,18, 10:21

Emphasis on the training of the apostles (In Mark they are inept, in Matthew they are faithless and in Luke they are being prepared for the mission they will complete in Acts.)

Other facts to bear in mind:Luke/Acts almost certainly a single document—written at the same time, by the same author. It may have been divided because the whole thing could not fit on a standard sized scroll.

Acts 1:1 “In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all Jesus began to do and to teach.” (note: Theophilus is also mentioned in Luke 1:3)

Who is Theophilus? Is he, literally, a lover of God? Is he an actual person-a recent convert to whom Luke wrote

Fun fact: Luke the longest book in the New Testament. We have more words of Luke than of Paul or John.

**I Prologue Luke 1:1-4**

Sets out the purpose of the gospel, which is to confirm the truth of the gospel, particularly its historical reliability. Very formal Hellenistic style intended to impress the Greek reader with its historical value.

Luke is writing a “carefully investigated,” “orderly account”

**II Birth Narrative.** Luke, the narrative historian, switches to a more old-fashioned Semitic-sounding style of writing.

The point of this section is that Jesus is the fulfillment of the pious Jewish messianic expectation. The best the Jews have to offer in terms of piety and righteousness are those whose expectation is fulfilled in Jesus.

Zechariah and Elizabeth (middle aged) are both priestly descendants and observe all the Lord’s commands

Joseph and Mary (very young) are humble servants of God, faithfully fulfilling the commands regarding purification and dedication

Simeon (very old) is extremely righteous and devout and is waiting for the expected Messiah.

The same holds for Anna, who is the female equivalent of Simeon. She is fully devoted to worship, fasting and prayer.

Theme of this section: The arrival of God’s promised Savior and the fulfillment of God’s prophets and promises.

Luke is setting the stage for his entire narrative.

Luke 1:5-18

v. 5 Zechariah of the order of Abijah—one of twenty-four orders (courses) of priests of Aaron. (actually, the eighth order 1 Chron 24:10).

v. 5 Note that both Zechariah and Elizabeth are of priestly descent.

v. 6 Both are very upright in observing all the Law of Moses “righteous and lived without blame”

Upright and observant. Both obedient and faithful.

1:9 Zechariah chosen by lot. God’s providence in sending the Messiah

Luke 1:7 But they had no children. Elizabeth was barren.

Luke 1:13 Your wife will bear a son.

Luke 1:18 Both old (past menopause) and barren A double whammy!

There is a pattern here: Righteous, upright people who are nevertheless childless/barren

Sarah who gave birth to Isaac (a prefigure of Jesus, only son sacrificed on Mt. Moriah)

Rachel who gave birth to Joseph (a prefigure of Jesus, at right hand, became slave in Egypt, back at right hand) (Gen 30:22-23) (note: v. 23 God has taken away my disgrace)

Hannah who gave birth to Samuel (a prefigure of Jesus: prophet, priest and judge/king)

Now Elizabeth who gave birth to John the Baptist who was the voice in the wilderness telling people to make straight the paths for Jesus to come.

Q: Can you relate to feeling “old, barren and useless”

Luke 1:19-25 God has good news for Zechariah, Elizabeth and us!

Aside: Luke 1:18, 20 Zechariah faithless—asked for a sign. God answered his prayer. The sign will be muteness for 9 months!

Message: Do not ask God for a sign!

Here is the message for us:

The old will be more productive than the young

The barren will be fruitful

You may have been poor—a reject in the eyes of the world, but if you will be upright and observant, God will make you productive and fruitful.

Luke 1:25 God has taken away our disgrace. (as in Genesis 30:23)

Luke has good news: If we will be upright and observant, we will be productive and fruitful and God will take away our disgrace!

Q: How has God taken away your disgrace? How will God make you fruitful—bearing spiritual children?

Luke 1 & 2 has parallelism between John and Jesus. John is born miraculously, of a barren woman (like Isaac, Samuel), but Jesus is born of a virgin!

Luke 1:26-38

Birth of Jesus. Matthew’s account focuses on Joseph. Luke focuses on Mary.

Here we see emphasized Luke’s theme of turning the world upside down and salvation for the Gentiles.

Facts about Mary:

1. She was very young.

2. She was female.

3. She was poor.

4. She was defenseless and vulnerable

What does God say to her? Luke 1:26-29. Talk about a turnaround!

1. You are highly favored. (Imagine that!!!)

Who is highly favored to God? The young, the female, the poor, the defenseless and the vulnerable.

2. God is with you. Talk about good news.

This is what God says to all of us who are, like Mary and Joseph, Elizabeth and Zechariah, Simeon and Ana, are pious and observant:

But think about it. What is the good news? You will be pregnant. You will be the object of scorn and great shame, and, almost certainly, your betrothed will put you away. Your life in Jewish society is OVER!

Mary’s amazing response: Luke 1:34-38

Luke 1:38 I am the Lord’s Servant. May it be to me as you have said.

Luke 1:39-45 Mary goes to be with family. To save from disgracing Joseph?

Luke 1:45 (Elizabeth to Mary) Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished. A great memory verse!

Let’s say it together: Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!

Luke 1:46-56 (esp. 51-53) (Mary’s song) He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;

He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts

He has brought down the rulers from their thrones

but has lifted up the humble

He has filled the hungry with good things

but has sent the rich away empty.

The theme of Luke announced: Jesus is savior. This IS salvation in Luke!!!!

In Luke and Acts, “salvation” is not just about a future in heaven. In Luke, salvation is something we have today in the Kingdom of God.

Salvation: Preservation or deliverance from destruction, difficulty or evil.

Luke 1:67-79 esp. v 71 (salvation, rescue from our enemies… the Jewish expectation) and v. 77-79 (knowledge of salvation… forgiveness of sins)

Luke 2:8-12 A savior has been born.

Luke 2:11 A theme verse of Luke.

Luke 2:28-32 Q: What did Simeon see? (revelation for the Gentiles and glory for Israel.)

Luke 3:4-6 (quoting Isaiah 40:3-5) What did JTB see? Things in this life will be made right. Paths will be made straight. People will see the right way to live.

Luke 7:36-50 (read v. 48-50) Who did they think would be saved? The Pharisee. Who was actually saved? The sinful woman (or anyone who understands that they are very sinful)

Luke 18:18-30 Who were the apostles assuming would be saved? The rich! Who was saved? Acc. Jesus, who will be saved? 18:29-30. Those who give up everything.

Luke 19:5-10 The lowest of the low… A chief tax collector is saved. (read v. 9-10) *Today* salvation has come to this house. Wait a minute! He was not baptized. In what sense had salvation come to Zachaeus’ house? Jesus. When Jesus enters a house, salvation has come to that house.

Acts 2:38-40 How do we save ourselves? From what? From the corruption **in this world.**

**Q: What has Jesus saved you from? We are saved “already but not yet.”**

**Anger? Loneliness? Addiction? Legalism?**

To quote Joel Green:

Salvation embraces the totality of embodied life, including its social, economic and political concerns. For Luke, the God of Israel is the Great Benefactor whose redemptive purpose is manifest in the career of Jesus, whose message is that this benefaction enables and inspires new ways of living in the world.