

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE:

CASE STUDY


- This was written sometime after the fall of the temple in Jerusalem about 80 CE to 90 CE about 20 to 50 years after the death of Jesus.
- There are conflicting stories regarding the place of writing but it is generally agreed Antioch (Syria) or Asia Minor (Modern Turkey).
- The writer was a Greek speaking Christian convert of Paul who became known as Luke (see factoid)
- The method used to write was an edited collection of various sources of material about Jesus such as Q and material unique to his community which was presented in a mixture of literary styles such as narrative, miracle stories, parables. Some examples include

- The original audience were recent converts to Christianity from Asia Minor who had no Jewish background and were eager to learn more about Jesus. They were educated, intelligent city based non-Jewish converts. The opening gives us a clue where the writer states “Dear Theophilus” (friend of God). The theme of the book is come in you are very welcome. This encouraged Gentiles to be part of the way. It was evident this movement had to be more than just a Jewish one.
- The community was trying to establish itself as a Christian community that did not have Jewish heritage and was expanding under the guidance of the Holy Spirit into a life of work and prayer. They were a persecuted community that were reliant on an oral tradition and artwork. (Make a comment from what you learnt in A and A.)

- Luke emphasises that God's saving love is for all people by use of parables such as *the healing of the centurion's servant* (Luke 7:1-10).
- Luke uses fewer Jewish terms than other Gospel writers so in the crucifixion account there is no need to translate Jesus' last words (Luke 23: 46).
- Luke explains where places are in Palestine e.g. that Capernaum is a city in Galilee (Luke 4:31). Another example is
- Luke presents many stories and parables about prayer, the Holy Spirit and discipleship i.e. *Jesus prays in a deserted place* (Luke 5:16), *The Holy Spirit teaches in times of difficulty* (Luke 12:11-12), *Jesus send out seventy-two disciples ahead of him* (Luke 10:1-16).

The original meaning of the Gospel to the people was

- Jesus is born to save all people.
- Jesus is fully human and fully God.
- The birth of Jesus is the fulfilment of the Old Testament.
- Jesus' birth calls the reader to discipleship

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- Jesus has come to save all people not just Christians as seen in the inclusion of the shepherds who were isolated poor members of the community.
 - Knowing the Christmas story calls believers to discipleship; believers need to tell people about Jesus just as the shepherds did.

• **The Meaning of Luke 2:1-21**

- In the synoptic Gospel of Luke at the start during the infancy narrative as part of the introduction to the story of Jesus which looks at the background to his birth and early childhood.
- It is background information about Jesus that sets his life in the context of the Jewish community (Joseph was descended from David) and indicates that his birth is significant because of where it occurred, (Bethlehem) the circumstances (poverty – in a manger) and the responses of those who witnessed it. (they made known to others what they had learnt about the child)
- Gentile Christians who were unsure that they belonged to the community because they were not Jews as Jesus and the first believers were.

Some customs had to be explained

For registration families had to go to the Man's (Father's) family town (v3).

- The Messiah was to come from David's tribe whose home town was Bethlehem (v4).
- Shepherds were lowly people isolated from the main community they were outsiders as were the Gentiles in the Christian community (v8).
- Angels in scripture are messengers from God what they say God is saying.(v 10-14).

- The Angel speaks which is important as this is God saying not to be afraid. God is speaking to those on the outside of the religious community.
- The Angels singing signifies that God is very pleased with what is happening and that this is an important event in salvation history which all people even those who are not Jews can join in with.
- The shepherds speak which is significant because it shows that they understand the message is important and want to share, those that are not the Jews are spreading the Good News.

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- **How do the characters interact and what is the significance of these interactions?**

- Joseph takes Mary to Bethlehem so that Jesus is born in Bethlehem.
- The Angel speaks to the Shepherds those on the outer edges of society.
- A multitude of the heavenly host praise God signifying the importance of Jesus' birth.
- The shepherds talk to each other about going to see the child signifying their trust in the message and eagerness to see the Messiah.
- The shepherds see Mary, Joseph and the child which causes them to go out and tell others about their experience.
- The shepherds tell others about the child and these people are amazed about what they hear.

Important Notes

- The passage completes the story of how Jesus comes to be born by following the accounts of the visit of Mary to Elizabeth and the Birth of John the Baptist which places the birth of Jesus in the overall story of salvation history.
- The passage leads to the recognition of Jesus as the Messiah at his naming and presentation in the Temple when Simeon indicates that he is the saviour of both the Jews and the gentiles as consolation to the community that Jesus is their Saviour as well as the Jews.

Links to this passage in other pieces of Scripture

- Matthew's account of Jesus' birth (Matthew 1:18-25).
- The Gospel of John's presentation of Mary as Mother of the Church (John 19: 25-27).
- Hannah's prayer in the Book of Samuel (1 Samuel 1:1-5).
- Isaiah's prophesy of the Messiah (Isaiah 9:6-7).

The Original Audience Message

- That Jesus was the promised Messiah of the Old Testament.
- That Jesus came to save all people not just the Jews but including gentile converts.
- That the response to accepting Jesus is to go out like the shepherds and preach the Good News.
- Please make a link here to the major themes.

The Message It Sends Today

- Jesus has come to save everybody including those that consider themselves less perfect such as the Shepherds and those that believers might consider outside the community such as those of other traditions.
- The response to the message of Jesus' birth is to spread the Good News that Jesus is Saviour of all.

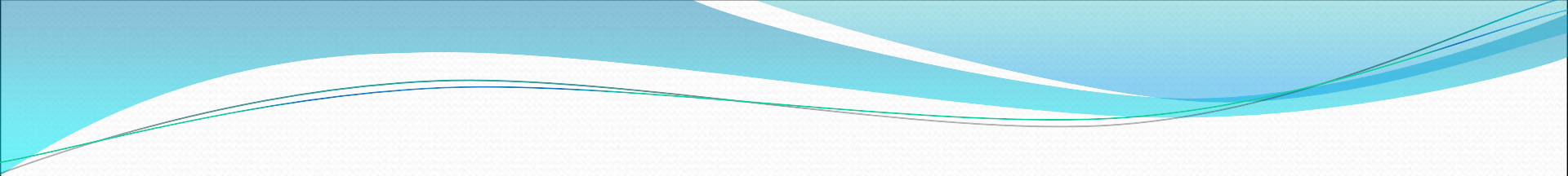
Another

- Read Luke 17:11-19
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- So that was a Historical Interpretation



Literary Interpretation

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- The passage is situated in the synoptic Gospel of Luke at the start during the infancy narrative as part of the introduction to the story of Jesus which looks at the background to his birth and early childhood.
 - **It is relevant where the passage is situated**

What literary genre is present in this passage?

- It's a Narrative. A telling of a story.

Religious or Social Customs

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The Speakers

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- The shepherds speak which is significant because it shows that they understand the message is important and want to share, those that are not the Jews are spreading the Good News