

ically isolated from the rest of the Christian world and became even more isolated due to the rise of Islam.

The Christianity that came back to Africa under European missionaries was Western in thought and colonial in spirit. For instance, Egypt, which figures prominently in the Bible, is not usually presented in Western Bible studies as an African country but as the essentially Middle-Eastern society it is today.

### Africa Today—Standing on the Shoulders

If we lose this tradition and forget to honour our history, we will not discover the wealth of early African Christian resources. We stand on the shoulders of our African Christian ancestors—the martyrs, teachers, clergy, and intellectuals—who have already run the race of faith. Their witness gives us an example and encouragement (Hebrews 12:1). We should not neglect them nor the rich treasures they offer. These ancient African brothers and sisters are roots of Christians throughout the world.

With the boldness of *Sankofa*, may the children of the Nile Valley, all of Africa, and the African Diaspora quench our spiritual and intellectual thirst! We are heirs to a rich history of ancient Christianity. But the question is: Do we know this history? Do we know the stories and contributions of early African Christianity? Do we tell these stories to our children and grandchildren? May the knowledge and legacy of such African giants ignite our own devotion to the Lord!

Continue the legacy of early African Christians and let their devotion, intellectual vitality, and Christian practices inspire you to ignite your faith in Christ!

cans gave their lives to spread the faith and preserved  
tors. You stand in the never-dying river of their living  
n and give us a legacy for both the head and the heart.  
th, martyrdom, and intellectual life to your children  
n, boldness, and humility of the Church Fathers and

## THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

**Author:** Luke was a Greek physician (Colossians 4:11-14) who became one of the apostle Paul's close travelling companions (2 Timothy 4:11). Luke wrote his Gospel based on his personal investigation of eyewitness reports of the life of Jesus Christ (Luke 1:1-4).

**Date:** The Gospel of Luke was likely written around AD 60 in Rome. Luke also wrote the book of Acts, often called "The Acts of the Apostles," which covers the time after Jesus' ascension into heaven and the establishment of the Christian church. We should think of Luke as volume one of the two-volume work Luke—Acts.

**Purpose:** Luke wanted to provide Theophilus, possibly a wealthy man, with accurate information about the life of Jesus Christ so that Theophilus "can be certain of the truth of everything" he had been taught (Luke 1:4). Similarly, Luke wanted to inform all his readers, both Jews and non-Jews, about Jesus' life on earth.

**Overview and Story:** Jesus is the perfect man, God's Saviour for the world, and the central person in the book. Luke tells the story of Jesus from before his birth (Luke 1:26-38) to his death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven (Luke 23:26; 24:49). Luke contains the most familiar of the stories of the birth of Jesus and four beautiful hymns: Mary's song of praise (Luke 1:46-55), Zechariah's prophecy (Luke 1:67-79), the song of the host of angels (Luke 2:14), and Simeon's song (Luke 2:29-32).

Zechariah, Elizabeth, John the Baptist, and Mary all played important roles in preparing Jesus' ministry. The work of the Holy Spirit in them and in Jesus is highlighted in the Gospel (Luke 1:35, 41, 67). Luke briefly tells about Jesus' childhood. At the age of twelve, he showed unusual wisdom when he sat with religious teachers in the Temple and asked them questions (Luke 2:41-52). A few years later, he went to John the Baptist to be baptised (Luke 3:1-38). This milestone marked the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

After his temptation in the desert (Luke 4:1-13), Jesus began to minister in Galilee (Luke 4:14-9:50). He selected twelve apostles, whom he sent out to proclaim the Kingdom of God. The word *apostle* means a person who is "sent," similar to the way the word *missionary* is used today. Gradually Jesus revealed himself as the Saviour of the world. He taught with authority and performed miracles (Luke 9:51-19:27).

Luke ends with Jesus' final ministry in Jerusalem (Luke 19:28-20:47) followed by his death, resurrection, and ascension (Luke 22:1-24:53). These events accomplished Jesus' great work of salvation and showed that he is God the Son. The death and resurrection of Jesus guarantee that we can have eternal life if we believe in him (Luke 19:10).

Luke emphasized that Jesus is fully God and fully human. He is a perfect and blameless man who never sinned. He included more details about Jesus than the other Gospel writers. He showed Jesus working with his hands, kneeling in prayer, and visiting homes. Possibly because Luke was a Gentile and not Jewish, he emphasized Jesus came to save all kinds of people—Jewish, Samaritan, Gentile, poor, rich, respectable, and outcast.

### What Luke Teaches Us:

- Luke shows that Jesus is the perfect man who never sinned. Since he is human as well as divine, he understands our deep needs. Rich, poor, marginalized, women, and children found refuge and salvation in him. Today all people are invited to receive salvation and follow his example and reach out to all kinds of people.
- Luke's message is that Jesus came to "bring Good News to the poor . . . proclaim that captives will be released" and "set free" the oppressed (Luke 4:18). That message reflects the aspirations of Africa. Today in Africa, nations and ethnic groups and families and individuals continue to face social exclusion—and need Luke's comforting message of deliverance.

### OUTLINE AND RHYTHM

#### Purpose and attribution (1:1-4)

#### Promises of miraculous births (1:5-56)

- Promise of the birth of John (1:5-25)
- Promise of the birth of Jesus (1:26-45)
- Song of Mary (1:46-56)

#### Promises of miraculous births fulfilled (1:57-2:52)

- Birth of John the Baptist (1:57-80)
- Birth of Jesus Christ (2:1-40)
- Jesus in the Temple (2:41-52)

#### The identity of Jesus is revealed (3:1-38)

- Preaching and imprisonment of John (3:1-20)
- Confirmation of Jesus' identity in the Baptism (3:21-22)
- Confirmation of Jesus' identity in the genealogy (3:23-38)

#### The temptations of Jesus (4:1-13)

#### Jesus' ministry in Galilee (4:14-9:50)

- Preaching, rejection, and healings (4:14-44)
- Miracle and call of Simon (5:1-11)
- Healings and association with sinners (5:12-32)
- Controversies (fasting and Sabbath) (5:33-6:11)
- Jesus chooses and teaches his disciples (6:12-49)
- Healings and association with sinners (7:1-50)
- Responses to the teachings of Jesus (8:1-21)
- Miracles and healings (8:22-56)
- Jesus commissions his disciples (9:1-17)
- Identity of Jesus affirmed (9:18-36)
- Healing (9:37-43a)
- Jesus predicts his death and disciples' response (9:43b-50)

#### Jesus and his followers (9:51-19:27)

- True cost of following Jesus (9:51-62)
- Ministry of the seventy-two (10:1-24)
- Neighbourliness and right choices (10:25-42)
- Jesus teaches the followers in parables (11:1-19:27)

#### The last days of Jesus (19:28-24:53)

- Confrontation with authorities (19:28-20:47)
- Illustration of worthy giving (21:1-4)
- Teachings about the future for the followers (21:5-38)
- Passover and preparation for death (22:1-46)
- Betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion of Jesus (22:47-23:55)
- Resurrection and appearances (24:1-49)
- Ascension (24:50-53)

### Introduction

1 Many people have set out to write accounts about the events that have been fulfilled among us. 2 They used the eyewitness reports circulating among us from the early disciples.\* 3 Having carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I also have decided to write an accurate account for you, most honourable Theophilus, 4 so you can be certain of the truth of everything you were taught.

### The Birth of John the Baptist Foretold

5 When Herod was king of Judea, there was a Jewish priest named Zechariah. He was a member of the priestly order of Abijah, and his wife, Elizabeth, was also from the priestly line of Aaron. 6 Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous in God's eyes, careful to obey all of the Lord's commandments and regulations. 7 They had no children because Elizabeth was unable to conceive, and they were both very old.

8 One day Zechariah was serving God in the Temple, for his order was on duty that week. 9 As was the custom of the priests, he was chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense. 10 While the incense was being burned, a great crowd stood outside, praying.

11 While Zechariah was in the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, stand-

12 Greek from those who from the beginning were servants of the word.

### APPLICATION

#### THE ACCURACY OF THE GOSPEL

Luke begins his Gospel by assuring the person who was receiving his letter, the "most honourable Theophilus," that he "carefully investigated" previous reports written about Jesus. Luke wanted to assure his friend that what he would be reading was based on eyewitness accounts. Luke was not just spinning tales and spreading rumours in Luke and Acts. As a physician, he was used to dealing in facts. It was vital to him to emphasize that he was recounting the truth.

Not all the disciples wrote down their experiences with Jesus. They came from a tradition in which disciples of great rabbis were expected to memorize the words of their teachers and pass them on. Memorization—and accurately reciting histories and lessons—is a long-established tradition in many societies. In many of our own African communities, we have

#### TRUST AND BELIEVE

Very few people are described as "righteous in God's eyes, careful to obey all of the Lord's commands and regulations" (Luke 1:6). Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth had such an honour. Yet, when the angel of the Lord told Zechariah that his prayer for a child had been answered, the priest immediately gave logical reasons for why it was impossible.

In contrast, his wife Elizabeth immediately believed that the Lord was able to answer their prayer even though she was "unable to conceive" and "very old" (Luke 1:7). By human standards, Elizabeth had reason to doubt God. But her response

1:1-2 John 15:27  
Acts 1:21-22  
Heb 2:3  
2 Pet 1:16  
1 Jn 1:1-4  
1:3 Acts 1:1  
1:5 1 Chr 24:10  
2 Chr 31:2  
Matt 2:1  
1:8 1 Chr 24:19  
2 Chr 8:14  
1:9 Exod 30:7  
1:13 Luke 1:30, 60  
1:15 Num 6:3  
Judg 13:4  
Jer 1:5  
Matt 11:11  
1:16 Mal 4:5-6  
1:17 Mal 4:5  
Matt 17:11-13  
1:18 Gen 18:11  
1:19 Dan 8:16; 9:21  
Matt 18:10  
1:20 Ezek 3:26



4:18-19

\*Isa 61:1-2

4:19

Lev 25:8-10

2 Cor 6:2

4:22

Luke 2:47

John 6:42; 7:15

4:23

Matt 4:13;

11:23

Mark 1:21-28;

2:1-12

4:24

Matt 13:57

Mark 6:4

John 4:44

4:25-26

1 Kgs 17:1-9;

18:1

Jas 5:17

4:27

2 Kgs 5:1-14

4:29

Num 15:35

Acts 7:58

Heb 13:12

4:30

John 8:59

4:31-37

//Mark 1:23-28

4:31

Matt 4:13-16

John 2:12

4:32

Matt 7:28-29

John 7:46

4:34

Luke 4:41

John 6:69

4:35

Luke 4:39-41

4:38-41

//Matt 8:14-17

//Mark 1:29-34

4:40-41

Matt 8:16-17

Mark 1:32-34

4:41

Mark 3:11

4:42-44

Matt 4:23

//Mark 1:35-39

4:43

Luke 8:1

4:44

Matt 4:23

Mark 1:39

every Sabbath day. <sup>32</sup>There, too, the people were amazed at his teaching, for he spoke with authority.

<sup>33</sup>Once when he was in the synagogue, a man possessed by a demon—an evil<sup>\*</sup> spirit—cried out, shouting, <sup>34</sup>"Go away! Why are you interfering with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"

<sup>35</sup>But Jesus reprimanded him. "Be quiet! Come out of the man," he ordered. At that, the demon threw the man to the floor as the crowd watched; then it came out of him without hurting him further.

<sup>36</sup>Amazed, the people exclaimed, "What authority and power this man's words possess! Even evil spirits obey him, and they flee at his command!" <sup>37</sup>The news about Jesus spread through every village in the entire region.

### Jesus Heals Many People

<sup>38</sup>After leaving the synagogue that day, Jesus went to Simon's home, where he found Simon's mother-in-law very sick with a high fever. "Please heal her," everyone begged. <sup>39</sup>Standing at her bedside, he rebuked the fever, and it left her. And she got up at once and prepared a meal for them.

<sup>40</sup>As the sun went down that evening, people throughout the village brought sick family members to Jesus. No matter what their diseases were, the touch of his hand healed every one. <sup>41</sup>Many were possessed by demons; and the demons came out at his command, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But because they knew he was the Messiah, he rebuked them and refused to let them speak.

### Jesus Continues to Preach

<sup>42</sup>Early the next morning Jesus went out to an isolated place. The crowds searched everywhere for him, and when they finally found him, they begged him not to leave them. <sup>43</sup>But he replied, "I must preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God in other towns, too, because that is why I was sent." <sup>44</sup>So he continued to travel around, preaching in synagogues throughout Judea.\*

Isa 61:1-2 (Greek version); 58:6. 4:33 Greek *unclean*; also in 4:36.

### DEEDS CONTEMPT • Luke 4:24

ers to their town—the child of Joseph, a very humble man of meagre /men, means—have anything to say to them? But this rejection did not keep Jesus from his mission and calling.

In the same way, as Christians we should passionately pursue the purpose for which we have been called. Jesus shows us that it is not about position or background, but about the mission we have been called to do.

### The First Disciples

<sup>5</sup>One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee,\* great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. <sup>2</sup>He noticed two empty boats at the water's edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup>Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon,\* its owner, to push it out into the water. So he sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there.

<sup>4</sup>When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish."

<sup>5</sup>"Master," Simon replied, "we worked hard all last night and didn't catch a thing. But if you say so, I'll let the nets down again."

<sup>6</sup>And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! <sup>7</sup>A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking.

<sup>8</sup>When Simon Peter realised what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, "Oh, Lord, please leave me—I'm such a sinful man." <sup>9</sup>For he was awestruck by the number of fish they had caught, as were the others with him. <sup>10</sup>His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed.

5:1 Greek *Lake Gennesaret*, another name for the Sea of Galilee. 5:3 Simon is called "Peter" in 6:14 and thereafter. 5:14 See Lev 14:2-32.

### APPLICATION

#### TRYING A DIFFERENT WAY • Luke 5:1-5

Spending the whole night on the open water looking for fish and not having caught anything is discouraging. At the break of morning, the fishermen washed their nets in despair. They had laboured all night with no results. We may feel the same way. We faithfully work at our job, but when payday comes, we realise that there is not much to be happy about. We go home feeling empty, wondering if we will be able to support our family through another month. Sometimes this happens in the church. Ministers work hard, but there is little evidence that their church is growing or that God is changing lives.

Jesus told the weary, disappointed, and demoralized fishermen to cast their nets once more, this time in the deeper part of the lake. That meant they had to row their boats into the open lake and throw their nets in broad daylight. This was what they

5:1-11

//Matt 4:18-22

//Mark 1:16-20

5:4

John 21:6

5:5

John 21:3

5:6

John 21:11

5:8

Gen 18:27

Job 42:5-6

5:11

Matt 19:27

5:12-14

//Matt 8:2-4

//Mark 1:40-44

5:14

Lev 14:2-32

5:15

Matt 9:26

5:17-26

//Matt 9:1-8

//Mark 2:1-12

Jesus replied to Simon, "Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be fishing for people!" <sup>11</sup>And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus.

### Jesus Heals a Man with Leprosy

<sup>12</sup>In one of the villages, Jesus met a man with an advanced case of leprosy. When the man saw Jesus, he bowed with his face to the ground, begging to be healed. "Lord," he said, "if you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean."

<sup>13</sup>Jesus reached out and touched him. "I am willing," he said. "Be healed!" And instantly the leprosy disappeared. <sup>14</sup>Then Jesus instructed him not to tell anyone what had happened. He said, "Go to the priest and let him examine you. Take along the offering required in the law of Moses for those who have been healed of leprosy.\* This will be a public testimony that you have been cleansed."

<sup>15</sup>But despite Jesus' instructions, the report of his power spread even faster, and vast crowds came to hear him preach and to be healed of their diseases. <sup>16</sup>But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer.

### Jesus Heals a Paralysed Man

<sup>17</sup>One day while Jesus was teaching, some Pharisees and teachers of religious law were sitting nearby. (It seemed that these

had done all night—the only difference was it is harder to catch fish in the bright sun. It sounded like a useless effort, but they obeyed because Jesus had commanded them. And the catch was huge, almost tearing their nets and swamping the boats.

We often search for happiness, peace, and joy in many places. We use all our knowledge to acquire contentment but without success. Perhaps you are looking at the wrong places and using the wrong strategies. Jesus tells you to do something different. You need to look to Jesus and learn from him. Jesus said, "Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life" (John 4:13-14). Like the fishermen, we need to obey Jesus and find our joy in him. Our "nets" will overflow with his blessing.

#### FROM FISHERMEN TO FISHERS OF MEN • Luke 5:1-11

Peter was frustrated after a whole night of unsuccessful fishing. Then Jesus stepped into his business and brought about great success. Jesus' blessing of Peter's work did not mean that Jesus intended to make him a successful fisherman, however. Peter had not yet finished celebrating this miracle when Jesus revealed his plan to turn Peter's occupation of catching fish into a passion for catching people.

Today, "success" has become a common word for believers in ministry as well as in business. Success in the ministry is sometimes defined as increasing church membership,

especially adding members with financial means who can take good care of the "servant of God." Little attention may be given to meeting the spiritual and physical needs of God's people.

But "success" had a different meaning for the disciples. Peter left behind the benefits of his career. He did not focus on the miracle but on Jesus the miracle worker. We are not told much about how Peter prospered as a fisherman, but we are told how knowing Jesus changed Peter. We must not sacrifice our spiritual fruitfulness on the altar of success. Do not pursue what God can do for you; instead, pursue God himself.