



Four Gospels: One Jesus

A Bible Study for Swamp Lutheran Church

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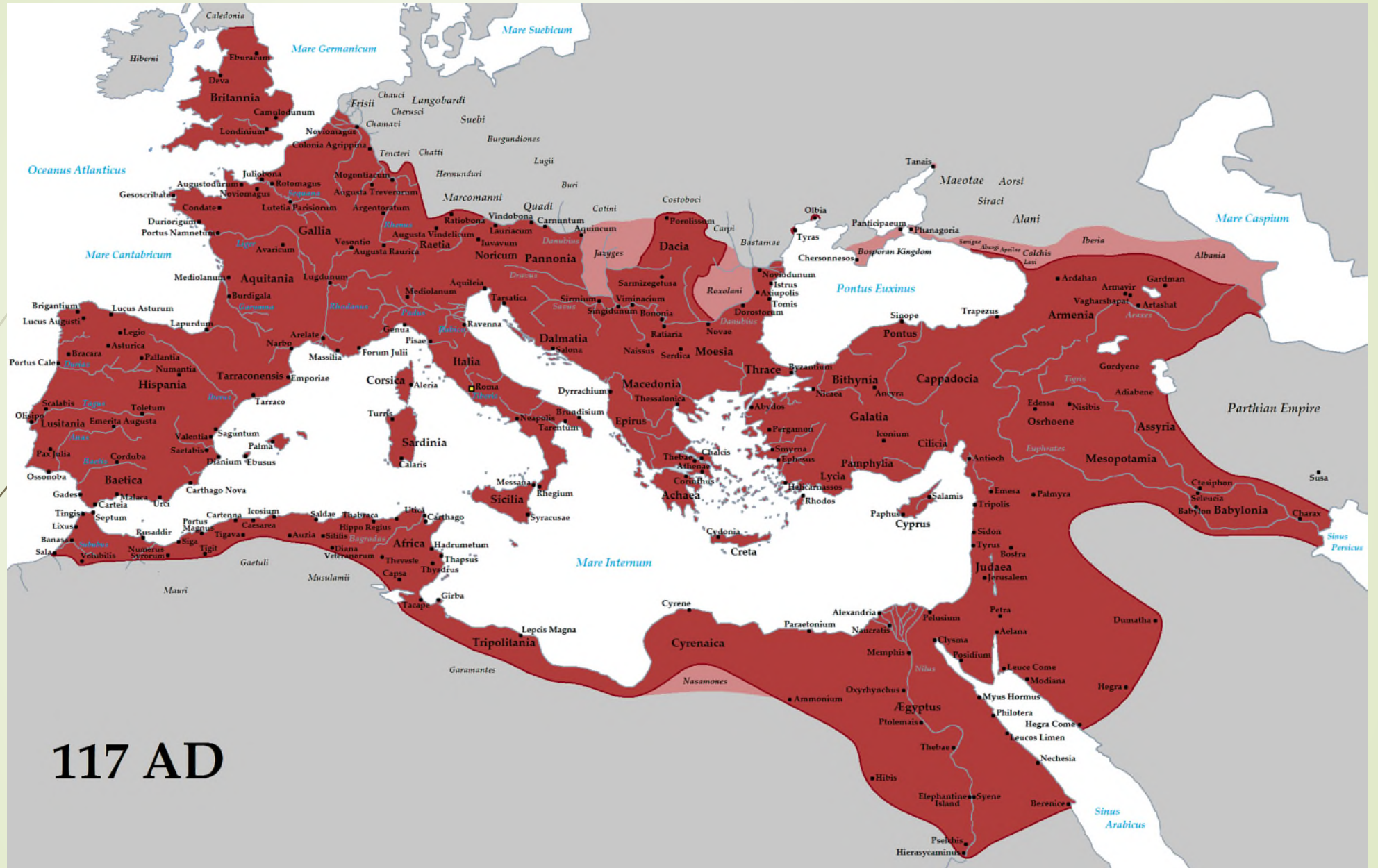
The Gospel of Luke

- ▶ **Author:** Anonymously written. An early (late 2nd century A.D.) tradition ascribes authorship to Luke the Physician, a Gentile convert to the Christian faith and a companion of Paul the Apostle. *Colossians 4:14* The Gospel is the first of a two part work; the second being the Acts of the Apostles. Together this single author is responsible for 27% of the New Testament.
- ▶ **Date:** Most scholars agree that a date from the latter part of the 1st century A.D. is correct, although some date it to the early part of the 2nd century A.D. Evidence of considerable editing by scribes exists well into the 3rd century A.D. The earliest manuscripts in existence are third generation copies dating from the 3rd century.
- ▶ **Place:** Possibly Antioch in what is now present day Turkey.
- ▶ **Sources:** Like Matthew, Luke draws heavily on Mark (42%) and Q, the Sayings Source, (23%). The rest (35%) is unique to Luke; the Lucan Infancy Narrative as well as many of the most loved Parables of Jesus, such as the Prodigal Son, The Lost Coin, The Rich Man and Lazarus.
- ▶ **Audience:** Mostly Gentile converts living outside Judea. They are mostly poor or working class.



The World of Luke: *First Century A.D.* *Roman Empire*

- The Roman Empire extended to include all lands which surrounded the Mediterranean Sea.
- The common language throughout the empire was Koine Greek.
- Though there were some local revolts (Roman-Jewish War 66-73 A.D) the time was characterized by relative peace, the *Pax Romana*.
- Class, status, social rank, were static. Born poor, always poor.
- The old Greek and Roman religions were becoming less popular. In their place interest in mystery religions arose; Mithraism, the Cult of Dionysius, and the Cult of Osiris. These all taught a life after death, and the need to gain secret knowledge to be saved. Mystery religions accepted people from all ranks and classes.
- Many believed the world was decadent and coming to an end. Some formed communes and retreated from the world waiting for the end to come. (Essenes and the Dead Sea Scrolls)




117 AD



Luke's Purpose for Writing

Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, ²just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, ³I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed. 1:1-4

- ▶ Luke himself was not an eyewitness. He is utilizing other sources, some which are now lost.
- ▶ He writes to “Theophilus,” a Greek name which means “One Who Loves God.” This could be a generically personal term or it could be a real person, maybe his patron. It is someone who has been converted to the Christian faith through instruction.
- ▶ Luke’s main audience are those already converted to faith in Jesus and encourage the mission to the Gentile world. His purpose is to strengthen their faith and equip them to resist false teachers.



Luke's Purpose: Continued

- ▶ Luke seeks to provide assurance to believers concerning their earlier instruction.
- ▶ He wants them to realize that those who teach them the faith are grounded in the teaching of those called and prepared by Jesus. *“²¹So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²²beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us — one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection.” Acts 1:21-22*
- ▶ Apostolic proclamation is rooted in those who knew Jesus personally and were eyewitnesses. *“³⁷That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: ³⁸how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; ⁴⁰but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, ⁴¹not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴²He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead.” Acts 10:37-42*

The Role of History in Luke-Acts

- More than any other Gospel, Luke-Acts is dominated by a historical world-view.
- History is first of all Salvation History, *the story of God's reconciling love with a humanity that has gone astray.*
- Luke always seeks to place the story of Jesus within the events of human history.

Luke's Historical Perspective

Creation

Parousia

Herod
Quirinius
Augustus
Luke 2:1

Tiberius,
etc
Luke 3:1

Paul's
Conversion

Mission to
the Gentiles

Jesus'
Birth

Ascension
Pentecost

From Creation to the Prophets

Life of Jesus

The Era of the Church

What is the “Parousia?”

- From the Greek word meaning “Arrival,” “Presence,” or “Official Visit.”
- In the New Testament it comes to mean the “Second Coming of Christ.”
- The Parousia would be the time of the fulfillment of God’s Kingdom on earth. Jesus will come again, judge the nations, and usher in God’s final reign.
- The earliest Christians expected the Second Coming very soon, even within their own lifetime. Paul believed so. *“²³But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ²⁴Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. ²⁵For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.” 1 Corinthians 15:23-25*
- By the second generation of Christians the expectation of the Second Coming began to wane. Some began to wonder when, or if, it would ever happen. *“²³But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ²⁴Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. ²⁵For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.” Matthew 24:23-25*

Luke's Approach to the Delay of the Parousia

- ▶ Luke shifts the expectation of an imminently arriving Parousia to the day-to-day concerns of Christian living. He emphasizes the “daily” or “each day” aspect of Jesus’ teaching:
 - ▶ “²³Then he said to them all, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross **daily** and follow me.” Luke 9:23. Compare the same passage in Mathew and Mark: “²⁴Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” Mt. 16:24
 - ▶ “³Give us **each** day our daily bread.” Luke 11:3. Compare Matthew 6:11 “¹¹Give us today our daily bread.”
- ▶ Luke introduces the Parable of the Pounds (about a nobleman who entrusted money to servants while he was away) to explain the apparent delay of God’s Kingdom: “¹¹As they were listening to this, he went on to tell a parable, because he was near Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.” Luke 19:11



Don't Worry About Delay The Kingdom Is Already Here

- ▶ Luke shifts the expectation of a **future** Kingdom of God to a **present** Kingdom of God, made real in the life and ministry of Jesus. While there will be a future fulfillment the Kingdom has begun in Jesus and is now continuing to grow through the ministry of the Church.
- ▶ “²⁰Once Jesus was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, and he answered, "The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; ²¹nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you.”
Luke 17:20-21

Luke: Jesus is Champion of the Poor

- ▶ Jesus comes as a champion of the poor and outcast, announced even prior to his birth: “⁵²He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; ⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.” Luke 1:52-53
- ▶ Jesus sees his own ministry as directed to the poor: “¹⁸The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” Luke 4:18-19 quoting Isaiah
- ▶ Jesus does not “spiritualize” the poor: ““Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. ²¹Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.” Luke 6:20-21. Compare Matthew 5:3,6 “³Blessed are the poor *in spirit*, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven...⁶Blessed are those who hunger and thirst *for righteousness*, for they will be filled.”

Luke: Jesus is Compassionate to Those Who Depend Upon God

- ▶ Jesus shows compassion to the woman who was a sinner who responds with great love: *“⁴⁴Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. ⁴⁵You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little.”* Luke 7:44-47
- ▶ Jesus responds to criticism of “too much compassion for the wrong people.” Parables reveal Compassionate in Action: *“¹Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. ²And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.”*
³So he told them this parable: ⁴Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?....” Luke 15:1-4

Those on the Margins of Society Are Welcomed Into Jesus' Community

- Women were regarded as “second class.” Jesus welcomed them even as disciples. “³⁸Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. ³⁹She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. ⁴⁰But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me." ⁴¹But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; ⁴²there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her." Luke 10:38-42, see also Luke 8:1-3 in which Luke names women who accompanied Jesus “who provided for them (the twelve) out of their means.”
- Samaritans were “second class Jews,” and despised. Jesus welcomed them. The Parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:29-37

- ▶ ⁵²*He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;*
⁵³*he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.* Luke 1:52-53
- ▶ ²⁴"*But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.*
²⁵"*Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry.*
"Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep. Luke 6:24-26
- ▶ ⁹He also told this parable *to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt:* ¹⁰Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.' ¹³But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.'" Luke 18:9-14

▶ Jesus is Severe to the Proud and Self-Righteous (*Passage Unique to Luke*)

- ¹⁶Then he told them a parable: "The land of a rich man produced abundantly. ¹⁷And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' ¹⁸Then he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' ²⁰But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' ²¹So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God." Luke 12:16-21
- ¹⁹There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. ²⁰And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, ²¹who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. ²²The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. ²⁴He called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.' ²⁵But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. Luke 16:19-25

Jesus Warns Against the Lure of Wealth at the Expense of the Poor



Some Questions for Discussion

- ▶ So far we've explored the three synoptic gospels; Mark, Matthew, and Luke. Which one seems to present Jesus in the way you are most familiar? The most surprising?
- ▶ Luke wants us to know the compassionate Jesus. In what ways is this understanding of Jesus important for you? For the world in which we live?
- ▶ Jesus doesn't mince words concerning his support for those who are poor. How do his words challenge the church today?