

# Gospel P2

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## Luke E2: An Overview of Luke

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## Luke E2: An Overview of Luke

Jon: This is Jon from The Bible Project. Tim and I have been working on a series of videos that tell the story of Jesus as recorded by Luke in his gospel. In this episode of the podcast, we're going to do a quick overview of the entire book of Luke. We're going to work through each of the sections and observe how they all fit together.

Luke is a literary genius, and he makes it clear through his constant quotations and allusions of Old Testament stories, that Jesus is the continuation of the hope of the Jewish scriptures.

Tim: Jesus' story picks up the story of God and Israel that you read in the Old Testament Scriptures, and it's bringing that story to a culminating point.

Jon: Luke also wants you the reader to see how Jesus' mission is to outsiders, to the poor, and marginalized.

Tim: The surprising people, shocking, scandalous, surprising people that Jesus hung out with, and that constantly he was including and having parties with.

Jon: As Jesus went around preaching about the kingdom of God, he changed people and he called these people to live radically new lives of justice and peace.

Tim: Luke uniquely wants to highlight the social implications of these Kingdom communities that Jesus wanted to form.

Jon: The Gospel of Luke is a rich book, and it all works together to give a vision for who Jesus was, what he taught, and the surprising ending to his life. Let's go.

We're going to make a video on the Gospel of Luke.

Tim: Yes, we are.

Jon: Give me the big picture of Luke. Give me the flyby. What's in the main theme?

Tim: There are four accounts of Jesus. Each one, the author is highlighting a unique portrait of Jesus has shaped stories to highlight specific things. So Luke has a really cool way of introducing the story is with the long birth stories, telling the story of how Jesus comes onto the scene in a way that weaves him into Israel's history and prophecy and story.

Jon: Doesn't Matthew do that too?

Tim: Matthew has his own way of doing it, but it's more explicit. He has a long genealogy to start. He has all these fulfillment predictions. "This happens and this fulfills what the prophesy." Luke's way as more literary and character driven and subtle, which

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we'll talk about. But he's making the same claim that all four gospels make is that Jesus' story picks up the story of God and Israel that you read in the Old Testament Scriptures, and it's bringing that story to a culminating point.

Jon: Something I've always really missed in reading of the gospel is how connected it is the Old Testament. But it's cool to see.

Tim: You can read the story of Jesus without reference to the Old Testament but that's kind of like—

Jon: You're missing a whole dimension.

Tim: Yeah, more than. It's like watching the last movie of a Trilogy without having watched the first two.

Jon: It's like watching...

Tim: "Return of the Jedi"?

Jon: ...Avenger Civil War.

Tim: Totally, It's like watching a third installation of a story where you haven't seen first and second.

Jon: You can enjoy it and it's got its own shape—

Tim: But you won't appreciate...

Jon: The context.

Tim: ...and you won't get half of the depth of what's happening in. But you can get it as a story in its own right. We'll explore more how Luke does that in the introduction in chapters 1 and 2. It's really cool.

Then Luke portrays Jesus in Galilee announcing the kingdom of God. Luke uniquely wants to highlight the social implications of these Kingdom communities that Jesus wanted to form. In Jesus's kind of inaugural sermon, he uses a story that's different from the inaugural story in Matthew or Mark. And Jesus quotes from Isaiah and highlights how his kingdom mission is especially for and going to include the poor, the outcasts, the marginalized.

Then Luke goes on to provide story after story in chapters 5 through 9 of Jesus reaching out to the most hurting people in Israel. Very powerful.

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Jon: Now, when you say he's trying to create these communities, where do you get that?

Tim: Well, he's an itinerant traveling teacher, so he goes into Bethsaida—

Jon: Sorry. Itinerant means?

Tim: Oh, traveling.

Jon: Traveling.

Tim: Yeah. He would travel about Galilee going to different towns. He names some sometimes. Bethsaida, Chorazin. He would go give his talk, which Luke condenses in chapter 6. He calls it the Sermon on the Plain instead of Matthew Sermon on the Mount. But it's the same kind of thing he would say in any given town - his announcement of the kingdom, summoning people to follow Him, and how to truly fulfill the Torah and the covenant.

Then people would follow him, he teach them how to live, and then he would go on to the next town. Those people don't stop following Jesus once he leaves, and not everybody went on the road with him.

Jon: But some people did.

Tim: Some people did. But some people stay behind and just lived in the light of the kingdom of God now that Jesus has come to our town.

Jon: That's interesting. Is there any evidence of what these communities were like once Jesus left?

Tim: No, the story is so zoomed in on Jesus that the narrative doesn't show any interest or focus on that.

Jon: Would these people be people that showed up in Jerusalem during Pentecost?

Tim: Or Passover? Yeah, surely after the Passover where Jesus got executed, and then after the resurrection, after Pentecost, there are 100 plus people there. And then it grows thousands.

Jon: Because I always just imagined the 12 disciples and then a bunch of other people just cruising around with Jesus. And I guess I never really thought about these groups of people who didn't cruise around but heard his teaching, were affected by him and decided to be part of this kingdom movement.

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Tim: Yeah, that's right. Luke, chapter 8, out of all the Gospels, he's the only one to give a list of the most influential women in the early Jesus movement. So pre-crucifixion resurrection, chapter 8. He says, "He went around from town to town and village proclaiming the good news of God's kingdom. The 12 were with him, but also, hey, you should know about these women. He healed them, changed their lives. Mary called Magdalen, Joanna, the wife of who's the Chuza - she was the manager of Herod's household. She is a movement shaker - Susanna, and many other women."

These were the women who were supporting the Jesus movement out of their own means. There's a patron who's paying for Jesus to eat when he travels. Luke is the only one that highlights this little tidbit. Actually, this fits into a pattern through Luke acts were Luke wants to foreground the female disciples of Jesus more than Matthew, or Mark or John do.

Jon: So they would travel around with Jesus?

Tim: Yeah, these are on the road. Luke 8 opens. "Jesus traveled about proclaiming and he had the 12 with them, but also there's a lot of committed female disciples of Jesus. In fact, they're paying for this whole thing." Isn't that fascinating?

Jon: It's really fascinating.

Tim: Luke chapter 8, these little things that got you to read over.

Jon: Joanna, the wife Chuza, the manager of Herod's household. That's a big deal.

Tim: Yeah, she's significant. One of Herod stewards.

Jon: So, she has enough freedom in her job to be able to just kick it with Jesus on the road for a while, go on tour?

Tim: It's a great question. I mean, if we want to, we can nerd out and learn more about her right now. If you want to.

Jon: Joanna.

Tim: Joanna. Let's just do Anchor Bible Dictionary, the most exhaustive Bible Dictionary tools in existence. And once I got it digital, it just changed my life. I actually use it more now that it's not in book form. Joanna, one of the female followers of Jesus listed with Mary Magdalene, Susanna, one of the women who provided monetary and material aid from their own pockets to help Jesus' band of disciples.

She was one of the witnesses at the empty tomb. Her name's probably preserved because she was known in the post-Easter community as a witness to the early life

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and the death and the empty tomb of Jesus. That only Luke mentions her is likely because she was one of his eyewitness sources that he mentions at the beginning. That's a great example.

There's been studies on this in ancient literature that often historians would put their eyewitness sources into the story. That's why some people think Mark highlights Peter so much because he was the principal source. She's the wife of Chuza, one of Herod state managers. She's a rare example of how the gospel affected, people who are in authority =, people who are financially comfortable compared to the rest of it Galileans.

We're led to believe that this prominent woman left her family in home and traveled with Jesus providing assistance.

Jon: Wow.

Tim: We see an example here of the gospel breaking down class barriers, nullifying social taboos for in Jesus' Jewish society women were not allowed to be disciples of a prominent teacher. Much less part of his entourage.

Jon: So Jesus is totally breaking rules there.

Tim: Yeah. In first-century Judaism, this behavior would have been considered scandalous for a woman, not to mention a married woman, to be—

Jon: On the road. Wow.

Tim: That's entry by Ben Witherington. It's one of my favorite New Testament scholars. He's done comprehensive studies on all of the women named in the Gospels.

Jon: It's crazy. That's all we know about her? That's all that can be known?

Tim: That's just what he mentioned. But even then, that goes back to highlight how we end up here in the first place. Luke is specifically naming people, putting in stories to highlight how socially radical Jesus' Kingdom movement was.

All the gospel authors highlight it, but Luke, specifically insert Stuff to show how the social upheaval that Jesus caused wherever he went by his announcement. And it usually had to do with the kinds of people he said we're forgiven and could be a part of God's people now, tax collectors and prostitutes, and then how his communities just turned upside down the value system of the Jewish and Roman world.

Jon: There's no evidence outside of Scripture about what was happening in these towns after Jesus came through, like Josephus, or anything else?

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- Tim: Oh, about the Jesus communities that we—
- Jon: The Jesus communities. This is the first time I even heard that phrase pre-crucifixion, pre-resurrection that there were communities of Jesus developing.
- Tim: We don't know very much about them because the Gospels would be our only material where we would find this, and then, of course, the disciples themselves who were part of it who later go on in acts.
- Jon: Is it in Luke where they go on the road through the towns, two by two or whatever?
- Tim: Yeah, that's right. Jesus sent out a wave of his disciples, two by two. It's interesting in Luke, he actually has two waves of this. He has a smaller wave of the 12, and then in chapter 10 when he hits the road on his way to Jerusalem, he sends out a larger wave of 70 or 72 - there's a manuscript variant. But either way, he sends out a larger wave. So then, these are people who are known Jesus' disciples, they show up in some village—
- Jon: And there and these would be villagers Jesus had already been to likely?
- Tim: Or that he's going to pass through in a day. When he comes through, "Hey, Jesus of Nazareth is coming through. He proclaims the kingdom of God. Show up here tomorrow. You're going to hear him."
- Jon: Oh, wow.
- Tim: And then if people were like, "Okay, we want to hear it. Hey, do you need a place to stay tonight?"
- Jon: All 72 would cruise to the same town?
- Tim: No, no, no, they would go out to separate towns. Like on the itinerary route.
- Jon: So they would all get a town ready to go?
- Tim: Yeah. I guess Luke chapter 10.
- Jon: It's what a traveling teacher would need to do.
- Tim: That's right. Jesus was itinerant prophet, who would go and announced the kingdom.
- Jon: So he'd show up, the two people there would have already developed a bunch of connections, got everyone all amped up, found some places to stay, and then wait

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for Jesus to come through. Jesus comes through, he does his teachings and then they move on to the next town where that's happening again.

Tim: And it wasn't always positive. Sometimes people would reject him. And so, Jesus talks about, "if they're a person of peace and welcome you into their house, then great, I'll come to that town. But if not, then shake the dust off your feet, keep going."

There are some places where Jesus breaks out into the prophetic oracles of judgment on towns that reject him.

Jon: It'll be better for Sodom and Gomorrah.

Tim: Totally, yeah. Really they're like laments, prophetic lament. "So woe to you Bethsaida. If the miracles I did in you were performed in Sodom and Gomorrah, they would have repented." So yeah, some villages, probably it's a mixed bag in every village.

Jesus is Galilean the Kingdom of God phase. And we don't actually know quite how long it lasted, the chronological data.

Jon: He spend three years?

Tim: Yeah, it's interesting. The three years doesn't come from Matthew, Mark, Luke, it comes from the multiple visits that Jesus makes to Jerusalem in John. Then people use that as a chronology to fill in the stuff in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. But Matthew, Mark, and Luke just anchor the story in history, Jewish-Roman history at the beginning, and then it's just "And after this, and the next day, and after this."

Jon: So we really don't know how long Jesus was out teaching?

Tim: Yeah. It could be anywhere from a year to three years. I mean, it makes sense. The chronology in John, he goes to Jerusalem for three Passover over the course of things. Three years in there. But how long was Jesus and southern Galilee? How long was he in northern Galilee? Did he do the same loop 20 times? We just don't know. We don't know.

And because the order of the events in Matthew, Mark, and Luke are a little different of Jesus being up north or south or east, it seems like they're just trying to present a summary portrait.

Jon: So Galilee is north of Jerusalem?

Tim: Yep. Not quite 100 miles.



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Jon: Galilee is a large region, and the Sea of Galilee is there—

Tim: Lake. It's really just a big lake.

Jon: It's a big lake.

Tim: I mean, a really big lake.

Jon: Is it fresh water?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: What did they call the Sea of Galilee?

Tim: It just acquired that name. Even in Greek, it's called by the name Sea, but it's sometimes called the Lake of Gennesaret too.

Jon: And then Nazareth is?

Tim: Up in the hills to the west of the lake.

Jon: West of the lake, up in the hills?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And so that whole region you could just be going through doing laps around the lake—

Tim: Super hilly big region packed with Jewish communities. There were a couple significant Roman cities there that were full of non-Jews. One was Tiberius on the lake.

And then another one just a couple miles from Nazareth where Jesus grew up was a large significant Roman City named Sepphoris. There's a lot of stonework can some quarries found there. That's why people now think that the trade that Jesus' father and Jesus engaged in was done working on carpentry.

Jon: Cool.

Tim: I can nerd out on first century Jesus stuff all day long.

Jon: Yeah, that sounds fun.

Tim: But the kingdom mission in Galilee—

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Jon: The kingdom mission in chapters 3 through 9, Jesus is on his—

Tim: Dong his tour. And Luke's specifically of all the Gospels highlights this radical counter-cultural social agenda of the Jesus movement in the upside-down Kingdom. Luke just turns up the volume on that theme by his selection of stories and repeated words and so on.

So we can talk about that but the videos got to...that's Luke's contribution is this shocking, scandalous, surprising people that Jesus hung out with and that constantly he was including and having parties with.

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Jon: So we're still doing the flyby. So then this next section.

Tim: Yes. The middle section is the journey to Jerusalem. It just continues the same themes. Actually, almost all of Jesus' most famous parables are only found in Luke and they're found in the journey section in the middle. So the Good Samaritan, the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son, the prodigal son, the rich man and Lazarus, and the clever, crafty manager who cheats his boss but then gets honored.

Jon: That one is so weird. Do you understand that parable?

Tim: I think so.

Jon: Okay. Let's talk about it someday.

Tim: Okay.

Jon: The shrewd steward?

Tim: Again, almost all of those are parables talking about the surprising reversal happening in the kingdom of God.

Jon: So this middle section, 9 through 19 Jesus says, "The tour is over." His touring days are over and he's going—

Tim: He's on his way to Jerusalem to die.

Jon: He's like, "I'm headed to Jerusalem and I know I'm going to die." And then on his way there, Luke is showing him telling all these parables. There's probably some other stuff going on. Like he's healing people.

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- Tim: Yeah, there are multiple banquet scenes. This section is also tied together by people inviting Jesus into their house. And then over these meals, Jesus will either talk about the kingdom. The meal, and the people who invite him becomes an occasion to talk about God's kingdom or their religious leaders who don't like him, and he ends up getting into verbal kung-fu battles.
- Jon: And those religious leaders, they'd just be in the towns that he was at or would they come out from Jerusalem to be like checking out what was going on?
- Tim: It seems like both happened but at this point, he's already got some notoriety. He stopped through a town and the local rabbis and Pharisees have heard about him, they get in his face or they invite their friends up for Jerusalem. It seems like both happened.
- Jon: So that's the middle section. Then this last section goes to the end of the book from Chapter 19 to 24.
- Tim: Yeah. He arrives in Jerusalem, and he confronts the temple leadership, storms the temple, predicts that it will be destroyed. That doesn't make anybody happy. The temple stunt that he pulls seems to be the instigating event leading towards his arrest and trial.
- Jon: It's interesting. So he's pretty well-known at this point.
- Tim: Yeah, the crowds hail him as Messiah.
- Jon: Yeah, and people are thinking he's the one.
- Tim: And he doesn't do anything in that scene to deter them right. He kind of lets the crowds hype it up. He's been pretty under the radar as far as whether he's the Messiah but then he rides into Jerusalem and they're like, "You're the king of David. You're going to save us." And he lets them.
- Jon: And when people were saying that, they weren't just thinking "you're going to offer salvation to my soul." They're thinking, "You're going to help us become..."
- Tim: You're going to do what David did. He kicked all the Gentiles out of Jerusalem and made it the new capital.
- Jon: Yeah. "Make this our capital and God's going to dwell here with us, we're going to be a blessing to all the nations." All these covenants that God had promised Israel.
- Tim: That's right. Jesus has presented himself and was viewed as a messianic prophet leader type figure, like a Moses figure, or David. Their hopes weren't about the

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afterlife. Their hopes were about God, fulfilling the promises of restoring Israel to blessing and abundance and freedom in their land.

Jon: And he lets them have that?

Tim: Yeah, he lets the crowds hype it up and attract all this unwanted attention, and then he stormed the temple. I mean, he doesn't do anything to calm the attention.

Jon: Being diplomatic. He's not being diplomatic.

Tim: It's remarkable. It's a shift from Galilean journeying Jesus, he shows up in Jerusalem, and he just turns up the heat, and then he starts getting it all these theological debates which are also political debates at the same time with the leaders of Jerusalem.

Jon: Now, he's come to Jerusalem before.

Tim: We know from John that he has. As far as Luke goes, this is a climactic showdown thing - the clash of Kingdom.

Jon: And John, he's been in Jerusalem before? John, did he teach in Jerusalem when he was there?

Tim: Yeah, yeah, he would be teaching there. Which is almost certainly a more realistic portrait historically that Jesus would have been in and out Jerusalem like most Jews.

Jon: This was significant because, in his mind, this was the final showdown. He went to Jerusalem knowing he was going to die.

Tim: For Passover.

Jon: They're going for Passover and he's telling his disciples, "This is it, guys. I'm going to go and die." And they're like, "What? No. We're just getting started. You're the Messiah, you can't die." And Jesus is like knowing, "No, this is the end for me."

Tim: Yeah. It is the end, but again, it's the same upside down thing. He goes as the King and he intentionally allows himself to get arrested. He does nothing to stop the machine from crushing him unjustly. Then that's precisely the moment that Luke, like all the gospel authors, portray his trial and execution as a royal enthronement. He gets a crown, a robe this kind of thing except a scepter, even a little bit.

And the cross this is enthronement. It's the epitome of everything has been talking about up to that point. In the Passover meal right before it, which is essential event, the Last Supper, he interprets his death as the Passover lamb, he's the substitute for

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Israel. He's going to take the wrath of God, which is the same thing as the wrath of Rome. Just like God used Babylon to take out Israel, now he's using Rome. But Jesus steps in the path of Rome's wrath and takes it on Israel's behalf as the Passover lamb.

Then he says his death brings about the new covenant. Then after that, you get the resurrection, and then the Bible study that he gives to the disciples saying, "Listen, this is how the story had to go."

Jon: That's on the walk?

Tim: That's on the walk. And then he has a meal of fish with his disciples afterwards. And they do this Bible study through the Torah, the prophets and the Psalms saying, "Listen, this was the deal. Messiah would suffer, be raised and start the new covenant family."

Jon: Man, that would be so strange to be hanging out with a guy who was previously dead and you thought you understood him. You're devoted. You're sold out for this guy already.

Tim: He was already challenging you with his powerful vision of living in God's kingdom and how it upsets all your ways of seeing the world value?

Jon: So he's already turned your life upside down more than once, and now you're hanging out with a guy who was dead. And now he's blowing your categories again.

Tim: About like physics and the nature of the material universe.

Jon: In the nature of him and who he is and what he was really going to do because it didn't fit into this category of just simply free the people from Rome and set up a nation and headquarters in Jerusalem. He's like, "No, it's not that simple. Let's study scripture together while I'm blowing your mind at this new level."

Tim: Yeah, totally. Underlying every single stage of Luke's story, he uses keywords or images or echoes of Old Testament stories that he wants you to filter all of this through to show. There are a handful of places where Luke will say, "Jesus did this and this fulfilled what the Prophet said." But it's just a couple. Matthew is loaded with them.

But for Luke, he wants the story itself to become the echo of the Old Testament stories. It's just a much more literary dramatic way of doing it. So Luke's balancing two things. He knows this breaks everybody's categories, nobody saw this coming quite this way, but yet at the same time, this is the hoped-for fulfillment of Israel's

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prophets in the scriptures. So it's what we've been waiting for but not how we expected it.

Jon: "We" being the Jewish people?

Tim: Yeah, the first Jewish messianic followers of Jesus.

Jon: That's it. For this episode. We're going to continue our conversation in Luke. In the next podcast episode, we're going to jump and dig deep into Luke chapters 1 through 5. We're going to talk about the birth of Jesus, his baptism, selecting his disciples beginning his ministry in the wilderness on the Mount of Transfiguration, there's a lot of good stuff.

Thanks for listening. We make videos from these conversations. They're on YouTube, [youtube.com/thebibleproject](https://youtube.com/thebibleproject). We hope you enjoy them. Thanks for being a part of this.