

Dr. Dave Mathewson, New Testament Literature, Lecture 10, Luke: Background and Themes

© 2024 Dave Mathewson and Ted Hildebrandt

This is Dr. Dave Mathewson presenting New Testament History and Literature lecture number 10 on Luke: its background and themes.

All right, let's go ahead and get going. I do have bad news for you.

There is a quiz today but you'll kind of get an idea of what one of my quizzes looks like. So, we'll start with that and then I do want to move into the Gospel of Luke. One other announcement as well is there will be sure, although I still have not determined the time yet with my TA, there will be a review slash extra credit session on Wednesday evening sometime probably in this room.

So as soon as I find out the details, I will email them to you. So, if an email comes from the New Testament class, make sure you check that. Again, I'd remind you, that some of you may be also participating in other review sessions through the Academic Support Center.

Those do not count for extra credit. This is the session that my TA will hold on Wednesday evening is the one that will count for extra credit. Again, I'll let you know as soon as I find out when, exactly when it's meeting, and where, but it will probably be right here in this room.

All right, let's open with prayer, and then I'll hand out your quiz.

Father, thank You again for revealing Yourself to us in Your written Word, but we realize that that simply functions to point us beyond that to Your revelation and disclosure of Yourself in the form of Your Son, Jesus Christ, Your ultimate revelation to us. And I pray that as we work through the Gospels, we will be confronted in a new way with that living Word and will be more convicted and encouraged to respond in the way that the Scripture itself calls forth. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Please make sure that you see the spaces in the left-hand column.

Make sure you record your answer there, the correct letter. Don't circle it. You can circle it if you want, but what will get graded is that left-hand column with those blanks.

So, make sure your answer gets recorded in that space on the left-hand column of the quiz. Again, it's based solely on your textbook reading. Any correspondence or overlap with what we've talked about in class is coincidental.

Five doesn't have answers. Okay, that's my freebie to you. Some of you have answers to it.

Don't worry about that. Five, that's my gift to you. Oh yeah, number five.

I'm not sure what happened. My computer freaked out. Chapter number six, if you have number six that has two sets of answers under it, it's the second set.

Ignore that first line that says Mark, John, Acts, and Romans. Ignore that. The correct answer for number six is that Jesus was a rabbi, and the Old Testament law must be obeyed.

Man, I should almost collect these and start over. No, that wouldn't be a good idea either. No, no, no.

No. Okay. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Yes. All right. You're right.

Number six. Yeah, number six is the first set. That's right.

This is quiz B. For number five, that's a freebie for everybody. Number six, B, is the first set of answers. Mark, John, Acts, and Romans, that are the options you choose from.

There are two different quizzes. There's a letter A and a letter B at the top. If you have the letter A, you're fine.

Don't worry about it. You still get number five free. But if you have letter B, number six, the first set of answers, Mark, John, Acts, and Romans, that's what you're selecting from.

The rest of them you can ignore. All right. Hand those in.

Kind of hand them to the ends and then forward. I promise you the next, hopefully, the next quiz will be less confusing. I'm not sure what happened.

But I always blame it on my computer. But I want to continue to talk about the Gospels. We'll move on to Gospel number three.

And what we've been doing is focusing on what is distinctive in each of the four Gospels as far as the way they may be put together, what kinds of themes they emphasize, et cetera. And so, we'll do the same with Luke. We'll ask the question, what is unique about Luke? What does it seem to emphasize against Matthew, Mark, and John as well? What is the unique way it portrays Jesus? We saw that Matthew, Matthew portrays Jesus as primarily the son of David, the Messiah for Jews and Gentiles.

Matthew portrays Jesus as a teacher, portraying him as one of the way's favorite terms of Matthew to designate Jesus, as his son of God. He's also the fulfillment of the Old Testament. All the Old Testament stories find their climax in Jesus.

And he's the new Moses. We saw with Mark, that Mark primarily portrays Jesus as both God and as triumphant, yet also as a human being, perhaps an emphasis on his suffering and his passion, perhaps due to the situation and the audience that Mark is addressing. So, what is unique about the way Luke portrays Jesus? Well, we'll start by looking at what kind of book is Luke.

First of all, and hopefully, you picked this up in your reading, in your introduction to the New Testament on Luke, is that Luke actually, and I think we even talked about this way back near the beginning of the semester, Luke is actually part of a two-volume work comprising Luke and Acts. So when you read the first chapter of Luke and then you go to the first chapter of Acts, it's obvious that they belong together. They were originally a two-volume work.

There are theories as to why they were split, but at least one of the reasons why Luke and Acts are no longer together is Luke then, in the New Testament, Luke goes with the other books that it resembles, the other gospels, Matthew, Mark, and John. And then Acts provides, as we saw, a fitting introduction to especially Paul's letters, but in some respects to the rest of the New Testament. And it's a fitting bridge between the gospels and the followers of Jesus who carry out that work that Jesus began, and extending then into the letters that some of the main characters of Acts actually wrote, such as Paul's letters, the letters of Peter, et cetera.

So, Luke and Acts actually belong together. Luke was volume one of a two-volume work that when they were included in the New Testament were split, and Luke goes with the other books that it resembles, Matthew, Mark, and John. Luke actually, unlike the other gospels, Luke actually tells us quite a bit about how it was that he wrote his gospel and why he wrote it.

In the very first four verses, the first four verses of Luke bear a lot of resemblances to a typical first-century Greco-Roman biography. A lot of the vocabulary Luke uses in these first four verses. And Luke clearly tells us why he's writing and how he went about writing his work.

So, starting, I'll just read the first four verses since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, I too decided after investigating everything carefully from the very first to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus. Theophilus may have been the patron, the person that funded the writing of Luke, so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed. Now, what these verses tell us is a number of things.

First of all, Luke is apparently aware of other written sources. And we, I think we talked a little bit already about Luke 1, 1 through 4, when we discussed the reliability of the gospels. But Luke tells us that he's aware of other written sources that address the issue of the life of Christ or other accounts of Christ's life and teaching.

One or more of these may have been Mark or Matthew. Luke doesn't tell us, but he's simply aware of other accounts of the life of Christ that Luke apparently draws upon. And perhaps the suggestion is too that Luke finds them inadequate to some degree so that now he will supplement them or write an account of the things that he wants to emphasize about the life of Christ.

Second, Luke is dependent on eyewitnesses as well. He talks about the things that have been handed down by those who were at first witnesses of these events. So, apparently Luke relies not only on written sources and written accounts but also is relying on eyewitness reports.

Some think that the material in the first couple of chapters especially, where you have some of the detailed words of Mary or Elizabeth surrounding the birth of Christ, probably was passed down to him by eyewitnesses. That's a possibility. But Luke clearly is aware of the dependence of eyewitnesses upon whom he relies in the writing of his own gospel.

Interestingly, Luke himself decides to write his own account of the life of Christ. Again, Luke may have found the other sources or the other accounts inadequate, or at least not addressing the concerns that he wants to address about the life of Christ, but Luke himself decides to write his own account. It's interesting that very early on, a number of early Latin manuscripts of the Gospel of Luke included that phrase, it seemed good to me.

There are a number of Latin manuscripts that say, it seemed good to me, and to the Holy Spirit, as if verses 1-4 sound too much like this is Luke's own doing. In order to kind of sanction this as inspired scripture, a couple of documents early on in Latin add, to the Holy Spirit, which actually is a phrase you find in Luke's other writing in

Acts chapter 15. But interestingly, Luke does not tell us or give any indication that he's writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Again, you'll see not all writers are aware that they are communicating what is nothing less than the very revelation of God, and Luke doesn't seem to think he's writing anything other than a normal first-century Greco-Roman biography. Yet, at the same time, God's Spirit, although not explicit in Luke, is still involved, so the product is nothing less than both Luke's words, but also the words of God to his people. And then finally, Luke will write an orderly narrative.

The emphasis is on the accuracy and the order of this book, although by orderly we should not take it to mean necessarily chronological order. Sometimes Luke, as was typical at times of first-century biographies, Luke arranges material thematically or topically rather than chronologically. Sometimes some of the material you find in one place in Matthew will be in a different place in Luke, or if it's one place in Mark, it may be in a different place in Luke.

Again, that's not because Luke was confused or didn't understand when these things took place. It's just that at times, one of the gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, may choose to arrange things topically rather than in the order in which they occurred. And so, the fact that Luke writes an orderly account does not necessarily mean that Luke is more chronologically precise than the other gospels.

Again, he may sometimes arrange his book topically and go by theme rather than the order in which the events occurred. What about the author? What do we know about Luke? Luke, as your textbook told us, Luke, as tradition has it, was a physician, but more importantly, Luke was an associate of Paul, which may explain why Luke's gospel would be included in Scripture. Even though Luke himself was not an apostle of Jesus, he apparently was a close associate of Paul, who was one of Jesus' apostles.

So, it's likely that that had an influence on the inclusion of Luke's book with the other gospels, Matthew, Mark, and John as well. Interestingly, to demonstrate also that Luke and Acts go together when you put Luke and Acts together, actually, an interesting structure or arrangement emerges that looks something like this. First of all, Luke, and this is a, well I'll talk about the pattern in a moment.

Luke begins with Jesus in the context of the Roman world. Do you remember how chapter 2 begins, the so-called Christmas story? It happened or it came about in those days when Caesar Augustus, reference to Caesar Augustus, and the reference is to Quirinius, the governor of Syria. In other words, Jesus, Luke makes a big point of taking Jesus' birth in Bethlehem and placing it in the context of the entire Roman world.

That's why he mentions Quirinius and Caesar Augustus as the emperor during that time because he's making clear that Jesus, he's placing Jesus' birth in the context not just of Bethlehem and Jerusalem and Judea, but in the context of the entire Greco-Roman world. So, Luke starts with the broader Roman world in the first couple of chapters. Then Luke ends, Luke ends with an emphasis on Jerusalem.

Everything that happens towards the end of Luke happens in Jerusalem. In fact, there's an emphasis in Luke of Jesus traveling or journeying towards Jerusalem, so everything ends in the city of Jerusalem. Now, the book of Acts begins right where Luke leaves off with Jesus appearing to his followers in Jerusalem.

Acts begins in Jerusalem and remember Acts 2 with the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, which happens in Jerusalem. But interestingly then, Acts ends within the broader Roman world with the gospel finally through the apostle Paul and the preaching of the apostles, the gospel reaching the Roman world. So this is what is known, this is a literary structure, Does anyone know what this is called? It's called a chiasm where the beginning and end are the same and then the middle sections are the same as well.

It's when a work kind of moves inward and then it repeats itself and moves back outward, that's known as a chiasm. And Luke and Acts seem to be arranged according to this. Again, starting in the context of the broader Roman world, ending up in Jerusalem, then Acts beginning in Jerusalem and the gospel spreading to embrace the Roman world.

So that appears to be intentional on Luke's part. What I want to do is just emphasize and talk very briefly about a handful of important or key passages in Luke that really seem to reflect what he's trying to do, or at least some of the unique things he wants to do. And the first stopping point is Luke chapter 2. Luke chapter 2 is, before I look at that, by the way, does everyone see the page, I think it's page 16 in your notes, I have this outline.

It actually comes from a book from one of the professors here, Paul Borgman on Luke, a book that he wrote on Luke, a professor of English. And he suggested a key, notice this outline looks like, in your notes, like a chiasm. The beginning and end are the same, it works into the middle.

Now, again, I'm not putting this here because I agree with all the details of it. It's just an example of how Luke can be understood and how one can arrange a work according to this principle. Again, you kind of start and work to the middle and then the book works back out.

And sometimes it's what's in the center, as I have here in bold, it's what's in the center of that is often what gets emphasized at times. But let's go back to the key

passages, Luke chapter 2. Luke chapter 2 begins by, again, with Luke's account of the Christmas story, actually introducing you to something that's important for Luke. That is, Luke makes a big deal out of the fact that Jesus, unlike the account that you read in Matthew, where in Matthew, Jesus kind of gets a royal reception.

He's in Bethlehem, but he's in Bethlehem because he's a threat to Herod, the king. He's visited by these foreign dignitaries who bring him expensive gifts in fulfillment of Isaiah chapter 60. But in Luke, it's the exact opposite.

Jesus is portrayed as being born in rather, not just humble, but humiliating type of circumstances. This is a very important key for Luke, that he is going to emphasize not only the humiliating circumstances of Jesus but the fact that the gospel takes root in circumstances and in people groups that are considered to be disgusting and on the fringes of society. So why is it that Luke doesn't talk about the wise men coming to visit Jesus? Well, maybe he didn't know about them, or maybe he did, but certainly they did not fit his purpose.

Instead, Luke has the shepherds come and visit Jesus because this fits his purpose perfectly. Luke wants to emphasize, and we'll see this in a couple of other places, Luke wants to emphasize that the gospel goes out to the social outcast, to the disgusting elements of society. So, he has the shepherds who, I know we've glamorized the shepherds to be these wonderful people living in the cozy mountainsides of Bethlehem who come to see Jesus in the manger, but the shepherds would have been kind of on the lowest rung of the social ladder.

They were kind of the down and outers, or the disgusting of society. And so, Luke makes a point of having the shepherds come and worship Jesus because that will fit his theme throughout the rest of the gospel, that Jesus reaches out to the fringes of society, to those that everyone else rejects, to the social outcast. He begins that theme by drawing attention to these disgusting shepherds coming and visiting Jesus and worshiping him at his birth.

So, Luke 2 is very important for kind of setting the scene of what Luke's going to do and how he's going to portray Jesus and how he's going to understand the salvation that Jesus brings to his people. I talked a little bit about the central section. Again, in this example here, I've given you the book by Professor Borgman if you want to look at that.

But again, it's just one way of understanding the central section. It's well known that Luke has, again, a central section that's often called a travel narrative. Again, where Jesus is traveling to Jerusalem, which will climax in his death and his resurrection.

And this is just one, again, when you look at it, it's kind of a chiasm. It looks just like this, except a lot more detailed. But that's one possible way of looking at the central section of Luke.

Again, what you can see is Luke isn't just sitting down and writing a story off the top of his head. This may be very well crafted and put together and carefully structured as he writes his own orderly account of the life of Christ. Now, in addition to Luke 2, a couple of other passages to draw your attention to that are unique to Luke, and one of them is Luke chapter 10.

We've already talked about the parable of the Good Samaritan way back at the beginning of this semester as an example of how understanding the cultural background can illuminate the way we read a parable. For example, as I said, we've domesticated the Samaritan to make the Samaritan out to be a hero and someone who is desirable, but in the first century that would not have been so. At least to Jewish readers, the mention of Samaritans would have been done with great disdain and distaste.

The Samaritan was the least likely hero of one of Jesus' stories. It would have turned the readers off. They would have been disgusted that a Samaritan emerged as the hero of the story and not one of their Jewish heroes or leaders like the priests or the Levites.

But again, why is it that only Luke includes this story? Well, maybe Matthew hadn't heard of it. That's possible. Maybe Mark didn't know of it.

Maybe they did. But again, it fits Luke's purpose perfectly to demonstrate that salvation, again, goes out to the social outcast. So, it's plausible then that Luke would include a parable told by Jesus that has a Samaritan emerge as kind of the hero of the story, because that's one of the emphases of his gospel, that Jesus is the Savior, not for the elite of society or the popular, but Jesus is the Savior for the social outcast and the disgusting, those that everyone else rejects.

A couple of other interesting stories along with that is Luke is also, this isn't a parable, but it kind of goes along with this emphasis in Luke 10. Luke is the only gospel that has another interesting story, again, that maybe the other gospels didn't know about, but maybe they did and they just didn't include it, but it certainly fits Luke's purpose. There's one instance in Jesus' life where he heals 10 people with leprosy.

Leprosy was a serious skin disease on that day. Under the Old Testament law, you were unclean and you were basically banished from society and there were strict regulations for how you could be integrated back into society under Old Testament law. So again, notice Luke has Jesus ministering to lepers, those that would be social

outcasts, but it's interesting after Jesus heals these 10 people with this disease of leprosy, it says they're all so happy and thrilled, they run off, and one of them comes back to thank Jesus for what he did.

Does anyone remember who that was? The text tells us clearly. It was a Samaritan. Very good.

It was a Samaritan that came back out of these 10 lepers, only one came back to thank Jesus for what he did, and that was a Samaritan. Again, fitting Luke's emphasis that the gospel, Jesus reaches out to the disenfranchised, the fringes of society, the undesirables, the social outcasts, and the misfits of society. Those are the people that Luke consistently has Jesus reaching out to.

Another example that is not so much, isn't a parable, but again, it's something that only Luke has. Do you remember the story of Zacchaeus? I don't know if you still sing that song. They still sing that song in Sunday school, Zacchaeus was a wee little man, and I'm not going to sing that for you, so don't worry.

But, the significance of that is, number one, Luke is the only one that has that story. It's not in Matthew or Mark. It's not in John.

Only Luke has it. But, it fits his purpose perfectly, because again, tax collectors would not have gotten a much higher score on the social level than shepherds would have. Most tax collectors who worked for the Roman government, and especially Jews would not have had a very good rapport, not looked at them very favorably.

And often, a tax collector, not only were they collecting money for the Roman empire and Roman government, but they also would have been collecting money for themselves, usually, and kind of under the table. So, tax collectors would have been treated in about the same manner, although they would have been very wealthy, they would have been looked at in the same way that Samaritans and shepherds and lepers would have been looked at. They were the sinners the undesirables and the untouchables, but Jesus is portrayed as reaching out to these kinds of people, and the gospel goes out to them as well.

So, you see, starting with Luke 2, with the shepherds coming to visit Jesus, that theme just keeps getting picked up. It goes to Samaritans, the lepers, and even tax collectors are the recipients of Jesus' ministry. So, Luke is trying to hammer this point home, that the gospel goes out to the social outcasts and the undesirables, not just the wealthy or the elite or the religious establishment of the day.

Chapter 15, yeah, go ahead. The lepers, off the top of my head, I can't think where they're from, what chapter they're in. It might come to me.

If it does, I'll let you know. No, Zacchaeus isn't chapter 10 either. I think he's like in chapter 19 or something like that.

The next section I want to look at briefly is in relationship to parables. One of the unique features of Luke is Luke does have a number of parables that you don't find in the other gospels. Luke has Jesus teaching in parables numerous times.

Some of them overlap what you find in Matthew, but Luke has Jesus teaching a number of parables that you don't find in any of the other gospels. One of them is the three parables found in Luke chapter 15, where Jesus tells three parables. First of all, the first parable is the parable of a lost sheep, where you remember the story of Shepard, who brings all his sheep in, and out of 100 sheep, only 99 come in, and he goes out and looks for the one that's lost until he finds it.

Then the next parable is the parable of a lost coin. A woman loses a coin and she sweeps her house and turns it upside down until she finds that coin. And the theme of both of these parables is not so much the focus on the coin or the sheep.

The emphasis is on the rejoicing that takes place when it's found so that the Shepard rejoices when he finds this lost sheep. This woman throws a party and invites her friends to celebrate just because she found this coin she lost. So, there's an emphasis in these parables in Luke 15 on rejoicing because something lost is now found.

Now, if you ask the question, why did Jesus tell these parables? Go back to the very first two verses of Luke chapter 15. It tells us that Jesus was hanging out with some of these undesirable social outcasts. He was hanging out with and eating meals with tax collectors and sinners.

And this had the Pharisees. Remember the Pharisees from our discussion back at the beginning of the semester? The Pharisees were those who pursued purity. They responded to Roman rule and to the situation of the day by focusing on keeping the law.

They thought transformation would come by focusing on personal purity, ritual purity, and obeying the law. So, they see Jesus associating with these disgusting elements of society like tax collectors and sinners and Samaritans and people like that, and they're all upset. And they wonder why in the world does this person, you know, if he were truly one of us, certainly he knows the laws, the Old Testament laws, and he certainly wouldn't be associating with people like this, especially these tax collectors that are our enemies and are ripping us off.

So, in response to that, Jesus tells a parable, these parables. And basically, the emphasis is on the fact that Jesus must associate with these because that's why he

has been sent. He has been sent to rescue just this kind of person, even these social outcasts.

And instead of the Pharisees grumbling and complaining and criticizing Jesus, they should be rejoicing because this salvation is now spreading and going out to these people, even people like tax collectors and sinners. So, the Pharisees should not be griping and complaining. They should be rejoicing.

And the parable, that's why Jesus tells these parables. In the same way that a woman rejoices when she finds a coin, in the same way, a shepherd rejoices when a sheep is found, certainly, they should rejoice at something greater when someone who is lost is now found and restored to a relationship with God. But the climax of these parables comes in the last one, the third one, and that is the parable, we call it the parable the prodigal son.

I don't think I have a PowerPoint in this one. No, I don't. The parable of the prodigal son.

Interestingly, when you read this parable, usually the son, the prodigal son, the youngest son, gets all the attention. And you know the story well. The son, the so-called prodigal son, goes to his father and asks for his inheritance, which some suggest would have been equivalent to wishing for his death because it was only upon the death of the father that the son would receive his full inheritance.

But whatever it is, it's certainly a sign of extreme disrespect. And so, the son runs off and squanders all his wealth and ends up feeding the pigs and wishing that he could eat the food that he feeds the pigs. Finally, he comes to his senses and he thinks, I'm going to go back to my father and hopefully my father will at least accept me back as a slave.

Even if he will not acknowledge I'm still his son, maybe he'll hire me on as a slave because anything's better than feeding these pigs and desiring to eat what they're eating. So, he goes back to his father and you know the story well. The father runs out to greet him.

A little bit of background information. Most likely, I used to read this parable, and my wife was raised in southeastern Montana where if you've ever been there, sometimes your neighbors were 20-30 miles away, literally. That was your next-door neighbor, the ranch over, which could have been 20 miles away.

And sometimes the driveway off the main road, the main road which was dirt, the driveway, it took you another five miles to get to the house, the ranch house. You couldn't even see it from the road. And I used to think of them, I used to read this

parable in that light that this guy was kind of a rancher back in the, out in the middle of nowhere in Montana or something.

However, most likely this guy was living in a typical town in the Middle East. And everybody, not only did everybody probably know what the son did to him, but most likely everybody was watching when he ran out to greet his son. And if you were a wealthy father in the ancient Near East and your son had treated you like that, you did not run out and greet him.

Yet that's exactly what the father does in this story. And that's the whole point. The father humiliated himself even in front of the whole community by going out and receiving back his son.

But that's the whole point. That even if a human father doesn't do that, God does that. Whenever he accepts a sinner back that has treated him the way we have, God likewise humbles himself in receiving anyone back who turns to him in repentance.

But what we often miss is we focus on the prodigal and the father. What we often miss is there's a third character in this parable. Does anyone know who it is? Remember who it is? It's the oldest son.

And the father's interaction with the older son dominates the rest of the parable. And of course, the older son comes in and wonders what's going on. He sees the father throws this big elaborate party for the younger son.

This younger son who has betrayed him and squandered his wealth, treated him with disrespect. And now the father accepts him back as a son and throws this party and that has the older son jealous and angry. For what reason? Well, the younger son didn't deserve this.

The younger son deserves punishment and doesn't even deserve to be treated as a slave. And what is interesting then is the father ends, or the parable ends, with the father addressing the oldest son who's so jealous about what is happening. And this is what he says to him.

He says, Son, then the father said to the older son, Son you are always with me and all that is mine is yours, but we had to celebrate and rejoice because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life. He was lost and he has been found. End of the parable and then on to Luke chapter 16.

Now as you listen to that, what is missing from this parable? There's actually something missing. The tension is almost palpable if you read this story for the first time. I think we're so used to it and we're so focused on the prodigal son and the father that we miss it.

But again, you have this older son. He's out in the field working. He hears this party going on.

He comes to see it and he says, what's going on? This son of yours that treated you like that and you throw a party for him? What about me? And the father says, you've always been with me, but we had to rejoice because this brother of yours has been lost and now he is found. He was dead and now he's alive. End of the parable.

What's missing? For those of you literary critics adept at analyzing stories, what's missing in this parable? Yeah, what's the older brother's reaction? Did he join the party? The father's inviting him to join the party. Did he join or not? Or did he go back out in the field? The parable doesn't tell you. It's almost as if the parable is intentionally open-ended so the Pharisees will respond appropriately.

They will, in a sense, finish the parable. Will they respond? Will they rejoice and join in the rejoicing when a tax collector or sinner responds in repentance and God extends his grace? Or will they continue to complain and distance themselves from Jesus and from God's purpose in saving the world? So, the parable, I think this is intentional, Jesus leaves the parable open-ended to ask the readers to finish it. Will they join in rejoicing because God extends his grace to someone who doesn't deserve it or will they continue to complain and therefore distance themselves from Jesus? All right.

Those are some of the unique texts in Luke. One of the questions, I think one of the questions on your quiz, but hopefully you picked up from your reading, is what is intriguing about Luke? Half of Luke, half of Luke's gospel is not found elsewhere. In the rest of Matthew, it's not found in Mark or in John.

So, Luke has a lot of material that is very unique to him. But what is unique about Luke's gospel? What are some of the themes that Luke tries to communicate that he emphasizes that are not present in the other gospels or at least not to the same extent? Or at least even if they are emphasized in another gospel, Luke seems to want to emphasize them as well. First of all is, as we've already seen, Luke has a strong emphasis starting with Luke chapter 2, the birth of Jesus.

And I would even suggest chapter 1. Chapter 1 is no less humble, it takes place in no less humbling circumstances than chapter 2 does. But Luke wants to emphasize that Jesus, portrays Jesus as one who has compassion for the outcast of society. Again, we've already seen Jesus, it's the shepherds, these humiliating, disgusting shepherds that come and worship Jesus in Luke chapter 2. Jesus is caught by the Pharisees associating with tax collectors and sinners.

He has Zacchaeus come to him and he actually goes and eats a meal with Zacchaeus, this tax collector. Jesus is the one who heals lepers. The Samaritan is a hero of Jesus' parable.

So, Jesus is consistently portrayed throughout Luke as reaching out to the social and having compassion for the outcasts of society, for the social outcast. Again, Jesus is portrayed as associating with people that perhaps would have been forbidden under the Old Testament law, etc. Jesus is also portrayed as the primary way that Luke wants to portray Jesus.

If Matthew portrays Jesus primarily as the son of David for Jew and Gentile, as well as the new Moses and teacher. If Mark portrays a balance between Jesus, humanity, and deity. Luke portrays Jesus as the savior of the world.

That seems actually to be one of Luke's favorite terms, the word savior or the verb save, to save. He uses that proportionally more than any of the other gospel writings. So, Luke portrays Jesus as the one who brings salvation to the world.

He's the savior of the world, especially these social misfits and social outcasts like tax collectors and sinners, etc. Jesus is also portrayed as fulfilling the Old Testament. If you remember, kind of at the end of the gospel, the climax of this, after his resurrection Jesus appears along with two individuals who are walking along what is known as the Emmaus Road.

Jesus appears in their midst and they don't understand, they don't perceive who it is right away. But it says, then Jesus explained from the law and the writings and the prophets how they all spoke of him. In other words, Luke portrays Jesus, much like Matthew did, as the climax of God's revelation.

That is, as the goal and fulfillment of the Old Testament scripture. And so, much like Matthew, much like Luke, Jesus is portrayed as the son of David. That's one of the themes that Luke shares with Matthew.

Matthew has more talk about Jesus as Messiah and King, sometimes again he has a strong Gentile emphasis. But Luke likewise portrays Jesus, especially in the first two chapters. Luke portrays Jesus as the son of David, in fulfillment of the Old Testament promises of a Davidic king who would sit on the throne and rule over Israel, but eventually over the entire creation.

So, Jesus is portrayed as a fulfillment of those promises of a Messiah. Another emphasis in Luke is that's just a picture of a first-century or roughly first-century coin. Another emphasis on Luke is money and possessions.

Not only are many of Jesus' parables directed to that end, but notice when you read through Luke, which you should have done by now, is did you notice how many parables addressed issues of wealth and money? Furthermore, again back to Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus as a tax collector is a rather wealthy individual. And as the story goes, after Jesus meets with him and after he responds in faith to Jesus and becomes a follower of Jesus Christ, he sells half of his possessions or gives half of his possessions to the poor.

And he even restores anything that he's stolen from anyone, ripped people off from, he restores that fourfold. And I would guess that he was still fairly wealthy even after all of that. But Zacchaeus is portrayed as a rather wealthy individual.

Now there have been several suggestions as to why this is the case that I'm not right now interested in trying to pin down. But some have suggested this may reflect the fact that Luke is addressing wealthier members of the Christian community. Or at least that's part of his audience by this emphasis on wealth.

Nevertheless, Luke clearly, in his Gospels, Luke is clearly, especially as demonstrated in the Zacchaeus story, Luke is primarily against the hoarding of wealth and instead emphasizes sharing wealth with the poor, which kind of fits his emphasis on the social outcast, etc. But in Luke's teaching on wealth, there's a strong emphasis in places on condemning the hoarding of wealth and the collecting of wealth and instead being willing to share it with the poor. So, recognize that as one of Luke's primary themes is material possessions, wealth, and money.

And again, that may be because of the audience or at least part of the audience that Luke was addressing. And finally, I don't have a slide for the last one. Finally, Luke, one of the themes that is emphasized throughout Luke is the theme of prayer and praise.

So first, for example, first all, Luke, more than the other Gospels, portrays Jesus as praying at key points in his life, especially the lengthy account of Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane prior to his arrest and crucifixion. And this theme, prayer and praise, continues into the Book of Acts as well. But Jesus is portrayed as praying at key points and crucial points in his life.

But also, starting with chapters 1 and 2, and especially if you go back and read chapters 1 and 2, notice how many times individuals respond with hymns of praise. The best, the most well-known one is Mary's The Magnificat. Read chapter 1. Even the shepherds, when the angels appear to the shepherds, they sing a hymn, Glory to God in the highest.

The shepherds return, glorifying and praising God. So, all through the Gospel, you have this emphasis on the fact that the salvation that God provides, God is the Savior

of the world, should evoke not the response of complaint because God is reaching out to people that don't deserve it, but instead should evoke a response of praise and worship in God's people. And that seems to be a very key emphasis throughout Luke in prayer and praise.

All right. There are other themes regarding Luke that we could probably emphasize, but I've tried to hit on what I think are the key ones that you need to know. Any questions?

This is Dr. Dave Mathewson presenting New Testament History and Literature lecture number 10 on Luke: its background and themes.