

# **Dr. David Mathewson, New Testament Literature,**

## **Session 10 - Luke**

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So you think you know the Gospel of Luke, but what if I told you it was written less like an ancient scroll and more like a detective's report? Today, we're going to follow the clues, piece together the evidence, and see what this ancient investigator really uncovered and why his findings were so absolutely revolutionary. Okay, so we've got four Gospels, right? Four different portraits of Jesus. Matthew presents him as a king, a new Moses.

Mark shows us his power and his suffering. But Luke? Luke comes at it from a totally different angle. He presents his work as a careful, detailed investigation, all for a very specific reason.

So the question is, what did his investigation turn up that the others didn't? Before we even get to the evidence, we have to understand the investigator himself. See, Luke doesn't kick off his story with a big, poetic, in the beginning. Nope.

He starts out like a historian, almost like a modern journalist, laying out his credentials and his entire method right from the get-go. I mean, listen to this. He tells his readers straight up what he's doing.

He's not just retelling old stories. He's creating a structured, orderly account based on, and this is the key phrase, investigating everything carefully. His whole purpose? So that you can know the truth.

This isn't just a story for him. It's a fact-checked report. And get this, he even tells us how he did his research.

First, he says he reviewed the written accounts that were already out there. You know, he did his homework. Second, and this is so important, he went and talked to the original eyewitnesses, the people who were actually there.

And third, only after all that digging did he sit down to write his own definitive version. I mean, that's a pretty clear systematic process, right? So the big question is, if Luke did all this extra research, what did he find? What are the exclusive scoops that he decided to include in his account? Well, this is where his unique perspective really starts to pop. He consistently, and I mean consistently, zooms in on people from the absolute fringes of society.

Let's just start at the very beginning, the birth of Jesus. In Matthew's gospel, it's a total VIP event. You've got these foreign dignitaries, the wise men, showing up with gifts fit for a king.

But in Luke, who gets the first announcement? A bunch of shepherds. And believe me, that choice is deliberate and incredibly radical. You see, we have this cozy, romantic image of shepherds from our Christmas cards.

But in the first century? No way. This would have been shocking. Shepherds were considered dirty, dishonest, total social outcasts.

They were right at the bottom of the social ladder. So for Luke to make them the first witnesses? Wow. That's a huge statement about who this good news is really for.

And this focus on the outsider just keeps going. Take a story you will only find in the book of Luke: the parable of the Good Samaritan. To the original audience, a Samaritan was the absolute last person you'd ever expect to be the hero of a story.

They were rivals, enemies. And yet Luke specifically includes this story where the despised outsider is the only one who shows what it really means to be a good neighbor. The pattern just gets stronger.

Luke is also the only one to tell us about Jesus healing ten lepers. Now, lepers were the ultimate outcasts, literally banished from society. So Jesus heals all ten of them, but only one comes back to say thank you.

And guess who he is? A Samaritan. Once again, it's the rejected person, the outsider, who gets it right. And this theme gets even deeper with another story that's unique to Luke.

The story of Zacchaeus. This guy was a tax collector. Now, tax collectors might have been rich, but they were hated.

I mean, despised. They were seen as corrupt traitors working for the Roman government. They were social poison.

And Luke shows Jesus seeking this guy out, going to his house for dinner, and turning his life upside down. Okay, let's just step back and look at the evidence Luke's been presenting. We've got shepherds, Samaritans, lepers, tax collectors.

Are you seeing the pattern? These aren't just random stories he decided to throw in. His investigation keeps leading him back to the same kinds of people. So what's the big idea he's building here? What's he trying to show us? By zeroing in on these specific stories, on these specific people, Luke is crafting a really distinct and powerful message about who Jesus is.

It's a message about what his arrival means for the entire world. And honestly, it's a message of radical, world-flipping inclusion. When you put all of Luke's exclusive material together, a few core themes just jump off the page.

First, Jesus is the Savior of the whole world, not just one special group. Second, this salvation is especially good news for those on the outside, the poor, the rejected, the forgotten. Third, wealth isn't something you're supposed to hoard.

It's a tool to help those in need. And finally, the only right response to all this incredible news is just pure joy and celebration. But hold on.

There is one final clue. And it's a big one. It's not just in the stories he tells, but in the brilliant, brilliant way he structured his entire two-volume work.

The very literary design proves that this message was meant to go global right from the start. It's a literary device called a chiasm. Now, I know that sounds super academic, but it's actually a pretty simple and elegant idea.

It's basically a story structured like a mirror image or an arc. It moves from a broad starting point, narrows down to a central focus, and then expands back out again. Think of it like a narrative boomerang.

It has to come back to where it started. And Luke's two-part work, his Gospel and the Book of Acts, is a perfect, massive example of this. Part one, the Gospel of Luke, starts broad.

It sets the birth of Jesus in the context of the entire Roman Empire. Then, the whole book funnels down and focuses on one city, Jerusalem. Then part two, the Book of Acts, picks up right there in Jerusalem and then explodes outward as the message spreads from that one city to the very ends of the Roman Empire.

You see it? Wide to narrow, then narrow back out to wide. It's a perfect match. The structure itself is the message.

Luke intentionally designed his work to show us that this whole thing, this story that started with outcasts in a forgotten corner of the world, was always meant to break out and embrace everybody, everywhere. The journey from the Empire to Jerusalem and back out to the Empire again, that's not an accident. That is the whole point.

So here's where we land. Through meticulous investigation, a laser focus on the forgotten, and this incredible literary structure, Luke presents a savior for the outsider, a message of hope for the hopeless. This leaves us with one last question to think about.

By intentionally choosing to tell the story from the bottom up, did Luke end up writing the most revolutionary story of all?