ASF Study Materials for

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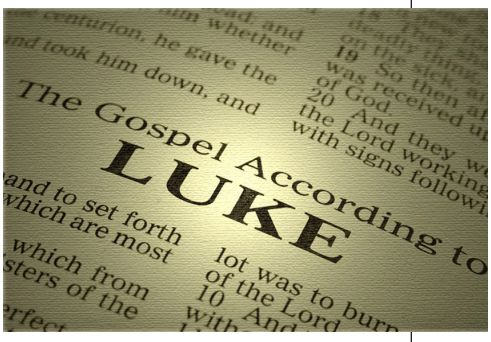
THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

PERFORMED BY BRUCE KUHN

The Event
An embodiment of Luke narrating the gospel and all the voices he depicts in the gospel

Where: Here and Judea
When: Now and then



Note: All Biblical references here are to the Authorized/King James version of the Bible, the edition used in this production.

These study materials and activities cover Alabama CCR Anchor Standards 1-10 for Reading Literature

Welcome to *The Gospel of Luke*

This theatrical event offers a one-man rendition of the *Gospel of Luke* using the text of the 1611 King James translation of the Bible. It is a compelling story of miraculous birth, ministry, healing, and prophecy, plus a dramatic end, all originally expressed in superbly styled Greek and then translated into the language of the English Renaissance, the language Shakespeare also used to great effect. In addition, for many people it expresses core matters of the Christian faith, an account of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection.

In these study materials, we will consider the story of the Gospel as narrative and start to explore its place as an historical document, both of which areas have had recent new developments in scholarship. Its place as a matter of faith is specialized according to religion and denomination, thus beyond the broad goals of the study materials.

Each of the evangelists became symbolized by one of the beasts mentioned in Revelation 4:7-8. Luke is associated with the ox, often winged, a figure of sacrifice, service and strength, as Jesus is portrayed in that gospel. "Evangelium" means gospel. *"Gospel" means* good news.

Because Luke presents the Virgin Mary's experience early in his account, many thought he had "painted" her portrait, and so he is also frequently shown painting an actual portrait of Mary and the infant Jesus, thus becoming the patron saint of artists, especially painters.

Meet Bruce Kuhn, Storyteller

Bruce Kuhn is a professional actor who performed on Broadway in the original cast of *Les Misérables* and in the national tours of *Chess* and *Cotton Patch Gospel.* As a member of the resident company of the Actor's Theatre of Louisville he appeared in roles as diverse as D'Artagnan in *The Three Musketeers* and Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as well as the premiere of his one-man show, *The Gospel of Luke*.

He now tours his one-man shows, which also include *The Acts of the Apostles, Cotton Patch Gospel,* and *Tales from Tolstoy,* to universities and churches throughout North America and Europe and has taught storytelling in Canada, England, and nine other countries. He received his classical training and Master of Fine Arts from the University of Washington and later trained with Uta Hagen in New York City.

His wife is a Dutch landscape painter, and he and his family now live in the Netherlands.

Bruce Kuhn in The Gospel of Luke, *which he performs in casual dress on an open stage to emphasize the words.*

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The Hebrew Bible
The Torah/Pentateuch/Five Books of Moses
Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy
The Prophets
Joshua
Judges
Samuel
Kings
Isaiah
Jeremiah
Ezekiel
(The Twelve Minor Prophets, counted as one book)
Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi
The Writings
Psalms
Proverbs
Job
Song of Songs
Ruth
Lamentations
Ecclesiastes
Esther
Daniel
Ezra (including Nehemiah)
Chronicles

The Hebrew canon contains 24 books, one for each of the scrolls on which these works were written in ancient times. Thus all the minor prophets were on one scroll and became one book, as did Ezra and Nehemiah.

The Hebrew Bible

The Three Bibles

While The Bible can be read as a complex and fascinating work of history and contains many forms of literature, it is primarily known and used as the basis of several faith systems—the Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant faiths. What each means when referring to "the Bible" is quite different, however. It's not one book; it's three.

Most scholars now refer to the sacred text of the Jewish faith as the Hebrew Bible, because its other names, the Tanakh or the Old Testament, are less neutral, that is, they are centered in different faiths and thus represent different views of what the text represents. The Hebrew Bible is the oldest, and the Catholic and Protestant Bibles incorporate much or all of it into what they call the Old Testament.

The spread of writing from the powerful to the populace apparently occurred about the 8th century BCE due to "the urbanization and globalization of society" in the Assyrian empire and in Judea as well. When the Assyrians and Egyptians began gathering information about their ancestors' traditions and history, so did the Jews. The oral history and tradition finally began to be written down across the ancient world. Scholars date parts of the Hebrew Bible back to the 8th century BCE and its composition continued apace through the 6th century BCE; it was largely complete by the end of the Babylonian captivity in the late 6th century BCE.

After lengthy debate, the early Catholic church agreed on the contents of its Bible at the Council of Rome in 382 CE, at which time Pope Damascus asked St. Jerome to translate the Scriptures into Latin, by then considered the common language. The gospels treating Jesus and the books on the formation of the early church were called the New Testament, signaling a new, second covenant of God with man following the one given the Jews in what Christians now called The Old Testament, a term first used by Melito of Sardis c. 170 CE.

The New Testament (Catholic and Protestant)
Matthew
Mark
Luke
John
The Acts
To the Romans
I and II Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
I and II Thessalonians
I and II Timothy
Titus
Philemon
To the Hebrews
Epistle of James
I and II Peter
I, II, III John
Jude
Revelation

Catholic and Protestant Bibles often divide and reorder the books in the Prophets and Writings sections of the Hebrew Bible.

The Catholic Bible, the Vulgate, the official early Latin translation, could be produced in book form and also includes Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, parts of Esther and parts of Daniel, which come from the Bibles of Eastern Christianity. These books are usually not found in the Protestant Bible, unless they are gathered as a separate section labeled "The Apocrypha." Thus the Catholic Bible has 46 books of Old Testament and 27 in the New.

The Protestant Bible contains 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. Martin Luther originally placed the Apocrypha in a separate section in his Bible, but in the 1820s the section was dropped.

Quotation from Prof. William Schniedewind of UCLA @ http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/ancient/origins-written-bible.html

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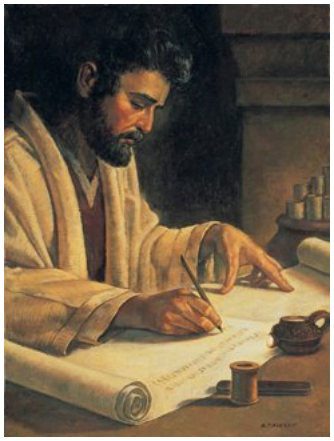
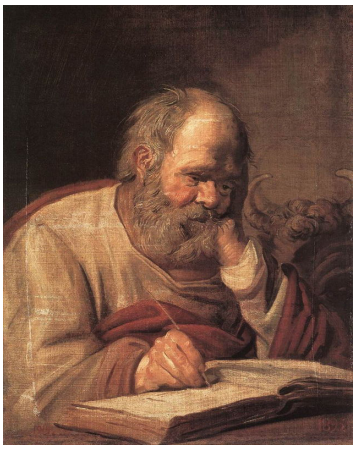


A modern painting showing Luke writing his gospel on a scroll—pieces of parchment glued together into a long roll, held at each end by a wooden dowel, such as the Jewish Torah. Such scrolls were then stored in leather tubes. This would be the historically accurate writing method for 70-90 CE. The Dead Sea Scrolls offer an example; they were found in caves in the Judean desert in 1946-47.



Luke anachronistically painted writing a book, that is, a codex, *separate pages bound and that can be turned. Paper was only invented by the Chinese during the time of Jesus. Such books as this did not appear widely in the West until the 2nd-4th c. CE.*

Basic Information on *The Gospel of Luke*

The following information comes from major contemporary academic historians of the Bible and the ancient world. It is not doctrinal. Many faith groups may hold alternative views.

Was there an historical Jesus? Yes, the vast majority of academic scholars concur that a man named Jesus lived from c. 4 BCE to c. 30 CE. He was Jewish and lived mostly in Galilee.

Who wrote the gospels? While the names on the gospels suggest that they were written by followers close to Jesus, Peter, and Paul, academic scholars generally agree that the gospels' actual authors are unknown, anonymous. During the 2nd century CE the nascent church likely ascribed these works to figures known to be close to Jesus, Peter, or Paul to enhance their authority.

The writers of *Matthew* and *Mark* seem more rooted in the Jewish tradition than the writer of *Luke* does; scholars think this writer was a Gentile writing to other Gentiles in Asia Minor or Greece.

The author called Luke, ascribed to be Paul's associate, a physician, wrote this gospel and is credited with writing *Acts*.

When were the four gospels written? Forty to seventy years after the death of Jesus.

The earliest gospel selected for the New Testament, Mark's, was written about 70 CE; Matthew and Luke's appear to be written during the next twenty years, probably 75-90 CE, and John's between 95-110 CE. They were all written in Greek.

Were these the only gospels? Scholars acknowledge there were more accounts about Jesus in the ancient world than are in the Bible, with many of the earliest works apparently lost.

Some conjecture there was an early book of Jesus's sayings, now referred to as Q (derived from the German word for *source*), used by the gospel writers. A few other related works have been found.

Why is it called a synoptic gospel? The word *synoptic* comes from the Greek and means "seeing together." Matthew, Mark, and Luke's gospels are called "synoptic" because they seem to share a common source and common material, often verbatim, the "Synoptic problem." See the example below. The gospel of John does not share this material.

Matthew	Luke
δων δε πολλους των	ελεγεν ουν τοις
φαρισαιων και σαδδουκαιων	εκπορευομενοις οχλοις
ερχομενους επι το βαπτισμα	βαπτισθηναι υπ
αυτου ειπεν αυτοις	αυτου
γεννηματα εχιδνων τις	γεννηματα εχιδνων τις
υπεδειξεν υμιν φυγειν απο	υπεδειξεν υμιν φυγειν απο
της μελλουσης οργης	της μελλουσης οργης
ποιησατε ουν καρπους	ποιησατε ουν καρπους
αξιους της μετανοιας	αξιους της μετανοιας
και μη δοξητε λεγειν εν	και μη αρξησθε λεγειν εν
εαυτοις πατερα εχομεν τον	εαυτοις πατερα εχομεν τον
αβρααμ λεγω γαρ υμιν οτι	αβρααμ λεγω γαρ υμιν οτι
δυναται ο θεος εκ των λιθων	δυναται ο θεος εκ των λιθων
τουτων εγειραι τεκνα τω	τουτων εγειραι τεκνα τω
αβρααμ ηδη δε και η αξινη	αβρααμ ηδη δε και η αξινη
προς την ριζαν των δενδρων	προς την ριζαν των δενδρων
κειται παν ουν δενδρον μη	κειται παν ουν δενδρον μη
ποιουν καρπον καλον	ποιουν καρπον καλον
εκκοπτεται και εις πυρ	εκκοπτεται και εις πυρ
βαλλεται	βαλλεται

A passage of the Greek text in Matthew and Luke, showing the identical wording in red.

What is distinctive in *The Gospel of Luke*?

- All the gospels were written in Greek, but scholars consider Luke to have the most sophisticated literary style, an educated style.
- *Luke* is also the longest of the four gospels.
- Moreover, 35+% of Luke's gospel is unique, that is, it does not appear in any other gospel.
- Only *Luke* mentions Jesus's childhood.
- Of the 35 miracles mentioned in the gospels, 20 are in *Luke*, 7 of them unique to Luke.
- 29 events in Jesus's life are unique to *Luke*, and 13 women mentioned are unique to *Luke*.
- Only *Luke* includes the praise songs of Elisabeth, Mary, Zacharias, and Simeon, and only Luke has the shepherds and the hymn the angel sings to them.

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Groups Referenced in the New Testament

Gentiles—non-Jews

Pharisees—Jews are expected to observe the purity and holiness code, but the Pharisees believed in observing it as strictly in everyday life as the priests did. Friction with the Pharisees began when Jesus and his followers began accepting Gentiles.

Sadducees—usually considered part of the Hellenized Jewish upper class who believed in being worldly and reasoning. They did not believe in miracles, supernatural occurrences, or life after death.

There were also other groups, such as the **Essene** community that lived separately as a kind of protest group, observing the Jewish laws in their own way. They produced the Dead Sea Scrolls. The **Zealots**, or insurrectionists, another, slightly later group, believed in armed resistance to Rome.

Temple image shows Alec Garrard's 1:100 scale model of Herod's Temple. The Second Temple was built in 516 BCE to replace Solomon's Temple which the Babylonians destroyed. Herod began an expansion and grand refurbishment of this Second Temple about 20 BCE, work only completed c. 63 CE, 7 years before the Romans burnt it during a siege.

Palestine in Jesus's Time

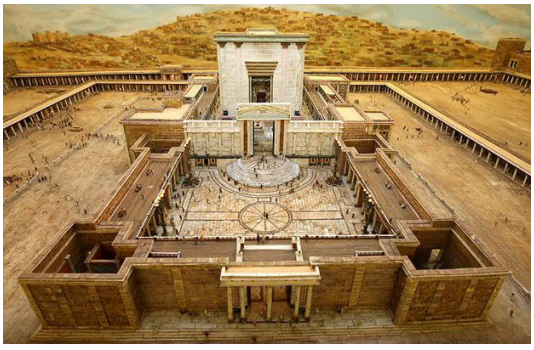
What Is Palentine? In the ancient world, Palestine is the geographic name for the area; Israel is its Biblical name, and it is also known as the Holy Land (Galilee, Samaria, and Judea), being sacred to Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

Who's in Charge: The Romans conquered Palestine in 63 BCE. It had previously been conquered by the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, and Greeks under Alexander the Great. Hellenism (Greek culture) continued to influence the land throughout and beyond Jesus's time, and the Greek language was used or understood by many in Palestine and by more beyond it. Thus the books of the New Testament were first written in Greek, especially since so many were written far from Palestine.

How the Land Was Governed: The Romans oversaw local governors. In the case of Palestine this was **Herod the Great,** a Jew who was called king of Israel and thought to be a tyrant. After his death the territory was divided among his three sons, one of whom had John the Baptist beheaded. Another proved so brutal that a Roman, **Pontius Pilate**, had to be appointed to govern **Jerusalem,** the capital of land, where Jews were expected to attend a major festival, such as Passover. The heart of Jerusalem was the Temple.

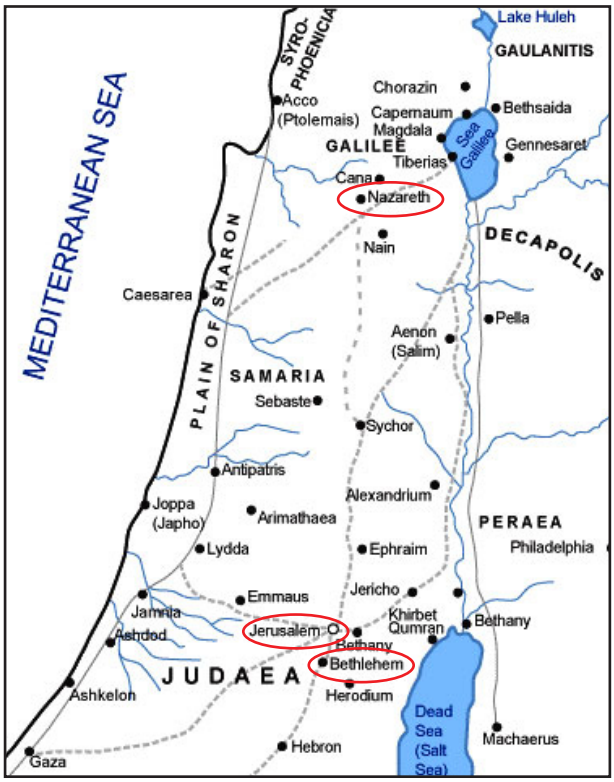
For taxation purposes, Jews were expected to go to their ancestral hometowns to pay, which is why Joseph, of the House of David, must go to Bethlehem from Nazareth.

Power abuse and protests led to a Jewish revolt in 66 CE, but Jerusalem was conquered and the Temple destroyed in 70 CE.



The Temple in Jerusalem: One god, one temple—the center of religious and civic life for Jews. Outer areas were open to Gentiles and women; only Jews could enter the Temple proper. In the holy inner area only priests conducted the sacrifices (a sheep or dove; flour and wine), which allowed Jews to purify themselves and to atone for sins. Deepest inside was the Holiest of Holies.

Moneychangers worked in the outer court, because only with shekels could one pay the tax or could pilgrims buy sacrificial animals as offerings.



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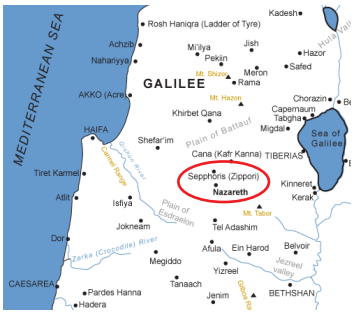

Built in 82 CE, Titus's triumphal arch (model for the Arc du Triomphe in Paris and many others) stands at the eastern end of the Roman Forum, honoring his triumph over the Hebrew Rebellion of 66-70 CE and destruction of the Temple, and shows Roman soldiers carrying away sacred items from the Holiest of Holies.

The First Century CE—Judaism in the the Gospels' World

The First Part of the Century

The century began with Palestine a Roman territory with powerful, often abusive governors, but Jerusalem a thriving city and several new Hellenistic cities being built in Judea or Galilee—one, Sepphoris, going up less than 3 miles from Nazareth.

Scholars suggest that anyone in the building trades, such as a carpenter, would have had a thriving business working in Sepphoris and would inevitably be at least bilingual, speaking and reading Aramaic and Greek, plus any Jew would know Hebrew.

Building was also, of course, importantly happening in Jerusalem with the continuation of Herod the Great's major improvement project on the Second Temple, making it a showplace for Judaism as Solomon's Temple had once been. The work, not yet finished, was only completed about 63 CE.

Being under Roman rule inevitably reminded the Jews of their time in Egypt and of their right to the Promised Land. This association as well as the grander temple—which foregrounded for them the Davidic covenant, promising the line of David a king and a united monarchy over Israel—kept ideas of possible change and a new leader alive in their awareness.

The Latter Part of the Century

The Romans killed Jesus as a no-account troublemaker—by crucifying him, a slow, torturous, demeaning public death. (Had he been an aristocrat, they would have sent him to Rome for judgment.) Furthermore, over his head they taunted him with a sarcastic placard bearing an acronym that meant "Jesus King of the Jews." Their LOL is implicit.

The death of Jesus desolated those who had hoped he would take temporal rule of Israel as in the prophecies. Which kingdom had he meant to rule, however? His words were about the kingdom of God.

Many Jewish sects and groups tried to define the best direction for Israel during the 1st century CE—be more pious, or fight the Romans, or withdraw and live cleanly in desert caves. Paul wasn't living in Palestine, however; he was preaching all over the Mediterranean to the Jewish diaspora, the extended population of Jews beyond Palestine. Others were preaching in Rome, in Egypt, and elsewhere, keeping an idea alive.

When met with more abusive Roman governance in Jerusalem, the Jewish insurrectionists took charge in 66 CE and rebelled. For a time they succeeded, but the Romans besieged the city, in 70 CE broke through, burnt and desecrated the Temple, and then laid waste to the city, effectively razing much of it to the ground. The Jews of Judea had to move elsewhere, and they did, to Galilee, to neighboring countries, and further into the Diaspora. The homeland was denied them as was their Temple.

This change had long-term effects on Judaism, and it began at the same time that the followers of Jesus were meeting with Jews to encourage them to follow his ideas about Judaism and to recruit Gentiles. Ultimately, the followers of Jesus formed their own religion.

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The Gospels' Different Emphases

Matthew: Jesus as king and messiah, part of the Davidic royal covenant and fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. The gospel opens with a genealogy that links Jesus directly to David and Abraham.

Mark: Jesus as servant; he "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (Mk 10:45).

Luke: Jesus as Son of man, the human-divine: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Lk 19:10). He acts as a prophet, and we get the only account of the Annunciation here and the only incidents from Jesus's boyhood.

John: Jesus as Son of God, the divine-human. This gospel gives Jesus a longer ministry and Jesus emphasizes himself more in his discourse.

The Four Gospels: Authorship and Dating

Modern New Testament studies have benefitted from archeology and the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls as well as from deep textual analysis of more ancient documents, thus enhancing their views on many aspects of the four Gospels, especially their dating and authorship.

Authorship

Traditional views of the gospels extending into the 19th century take the authorship as stated: Matthew the disciple, Mark (who worked with Peter), Luke (who worked with Paul), and John the disciple—in other words, many eyewitness accounts.

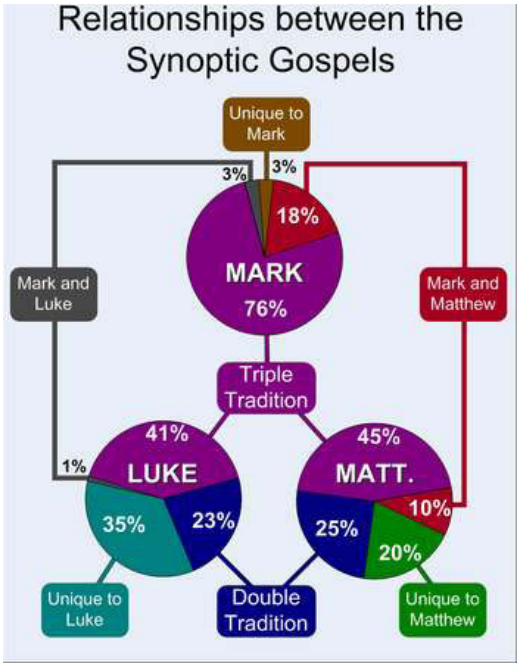
Modern scholarship points out that none of these names was associated with these texts until the mid- to late 2nd century CE, when the position of the church and its rhetorical needs differed from those in the first century CE. Thus all four gospels are now seen as having anonymous authors, some more Hebraic in language usage and emphasis, some more Greek (Luke is one of these; in fact, the most fluent and "literary" of the Greek writers). While many people still believe the traditional attribution of authorship, ascribing authorship of a work to someone famous or well-known was quite common at the time.

The four evangelists: L to R Mark, Luke, Matthew, and John.

Dates of Composition

Actually, Paul's early epistles are now considered the earliest parts of the New Testament, dating from as early as 45 CE. The gospels and the Book of Revelation are later, now dated 68-110 CE, and later epistles range to 130 CE. The first known extant fragments of the gospel texts appear from 125 to 250 CE. The New Testament itself did not take its current shape until the 3rd century CE.

Modern scholars consider the gospel according to Mark the earliest of the four, c. 70 CE, with Matthew's and Luke's ten to twenty years later, and John's later still.



From https://www.free-online-bible-study.org/synoptic-gospels.html

Textual Comparison

The gospel of Mark shares significant verbatim text with both *Matthew* or *Luke*, thus feeding the theory that it was used by the other two authors. Beyond this overlap, *Matthew* and *Luke* share additional verbatim passages, thus suggesting there is another lost source. *Luke* still has the largest amount of original material of the three. *John*, however, is 90% distinctive.

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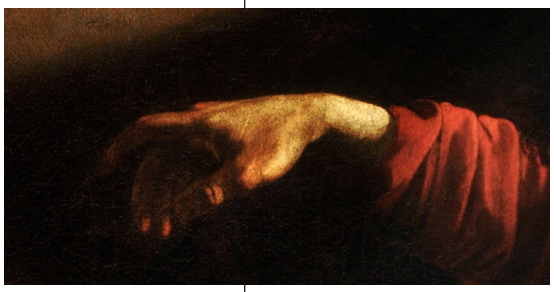
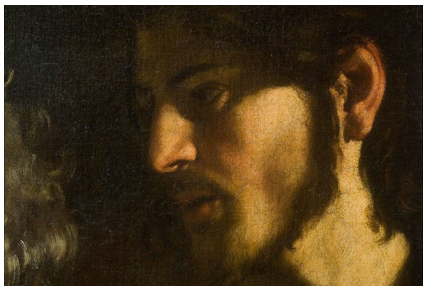
Narrative Elements in *Luke*: Genre

The Bible is an anthology of works written by many hands over many centuries. Its pages contain passages of history, tales of wonder, poetry, laws, aphorisms, prophecy, argument, and biography. It may also be shaped by literary patterns at work in the ancient world.





Caravaggio, Jesus from Calling of Matthew *(below)*

As Ancient Greco-Roman Biography

Recent scholars have looked at contexts, re-examining whether to call the gospels biography, because **biography** as a genre of writing has changed since ancient times. Today we expect a "tell-all" revelation of inner as well as outer life, all the juicy details, all the influences, all the debates and choices plus their consequences, with lots of pictures. Because of that association, many scholars insist the gospels are not biography—or not *that* kind of biography.

In the ancient world, however, the gospels' original context, Greek and Roman *bioi* ['lives'] were more analytic than "tell-all"—and there were no pictures. A *bios* assessed the information available and made its own case.

In Greco-Roman biography, the subject was usually considered morally exemplary: "Many biographies taught virtue and vice through focusing on the protagonist's deeds and words. One cannot divorce Jesus' moral teachings from his moral actions."*

Jewish 'lives' of teachers or priests in this time use the figure as a symbol of the Torah (the first five Books of the Hebrew Bible—the laws of God revealed to Moses). A recent view of the gospels, argued by Bible scholar Richard A. Burridge, is that "a thoroughgoing biography [is also] … a huge Christological claim: …'that not only is the Torah embodied, but that God himself is uniquely incarnated in this one life, death and resurrection.'"

Yet the gospels' accounts are transcripts more than audio or video. Almost no details let us catch Jesus's tone or body language.

As Rhetorical Arguments

In rhetoric, *argument* means persuasion. Rather than recording the years of Jesus's life, the gospels according to many modern scholars are persuasive recruiting documents of the late first century CE when they were written, and they believe each has a distinctive context, view, and audience. L. Michael White of the University of Texas describes the gospels as "stories told in such a way as to evoke a certain image of Jesus for a particular audience." Paula Frederikson of Boston University puts it more sharply, "They are a kind of religious advertisement. What they do is proclaim their individual author's interpretation of the Christian message through the device of using Jesus of Nazareth as a spokesperson for the evangelist's position."

In other words, all four gospels are seen as part of an era when followers of Jesus are trying to define their place within, or in John's case perhaps even outside of, Judaism, and given the historical events of the late 1st c. CE in Palestine, even twenty years makes a real difference in that context.

During those years history and faith, specifically the Roman Empire and the Jewish people of Palestine, violently collide at a time when the Jews are themselves in the midst of a discussion of what Judaism means and how it should be lived, with various groups and sects holding strong beliefs, among them the small but growing group of Christ-following Jews and allied, converted Gentiles. Thus, authors emphasized distinctive points and teachings to enhance a particular group's view.

Quotations are from Louise Lawrence's review of Burridge's *What Are the Gospels?* @ https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1479-2214.2010.00188.x and from https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/story/gospels.html

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if you do not have access to a Bible, the King James version is online @ https://www.gutenberg.org/files/10/10-h/10-h.htm#The_Gospel_According_to_Saint_Luke

Baptism of Jesus *by Juan Fernandez de Navarrete*

Activities for Working with Narrative Elements: Genre

Thinking about Biography and Performance

•1. IF a biography seeks to inspire, to show the central figure as morally worthy, ask and discuss how it can accomplish that goal:
—How might an inspirational biography start?
—How does it present the person? What contexts and actions?
—How does it get the reader to admire the figure, or get the reader to recognize what is worthy in the figure's words and actions by showing them? Is it any different for a viewer?

2. Can you think of an example you've read or seen recently that has presented this kind of biographical approach of a figure?

3. Is the *Gospel of Luke* such a work? Read part of the gospel (see left). Why is it presented this way? What do we get? What don't we get? What is the effect of its presentational choices?

Thinking about Rhetorical Argument and Performance

Pre-Show Activities

1. Before you attend the show, write a paragraph or two of what you have heard about who Jesus is. If he is not familiar to you, ask two or three people you know what they've heard and summarize those views. What sense do you have of this figure? After you see the show, write another short account of how Luke presents Jesus based on what you hear in the performance.

2. Explore whether you think *The Gospel of Luke* works like a classical analytical *bios* or a rhetorical/inspirational example of a life. Read part of the gospel. Why is it presented this way? What do we get? What don't we get? What is the effect of those presentational choices?
A few suggestions (there are many other possibilities):
The Annunciation, Luke 1:26-38
Jesus and his parents, Luke 2:41-52
The Temptation, Luke 4:1-13
Fishing, Luke 5:1-11

3. Pick a passage and decide how you would express and embody those words if you were doing oral interpretation or if your class were to do such a presentation in individual sections.

Post-Show Activities

1. As you attend the performance, watch and listen to how both the author and the speaker present the words, the other persons, and Jesus. What difference does seeing and hearing make? Describe and analyze your response in a paragraph or two.

2. If you worked with a passage pre-show (#2 or 3 above), assess the actor's choices in presenting that passage and what effect it had in the performance.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE
PERFORMED BY BRUCE KUHN

Thinking about Storytelling in Your Life

- Do you tell stories? Who do you tell them to? Why do you tell them? Do they have meaning?
- How do you get your stories? in-person oral? written? media or technology? What are the ± of each form?
- Who tells you stories? Do you have family stories? Group stories? How many kinds of stories have influenced or shaped you?
- What do you think makes a good story?
- Are all stories alike? Do all stories have meaning or are some "throwaways"? What makes the difference? Who decides and how?
- What is the difference between hearing and reading a story? Or seeing a story?

Storytelling in *The Gospel of Luke*

Christians call the New Testament gospels "the greatest story ever told." Whatever one's spiritual orientation, the story element of *The Gospel of Luke* is compelling and abundant in this performance.

Three Levels of Storytelling (outside to in)

- the performance as storytelling

When you are in the theatre with this piece, one man will tell you a story, a well-known story, but new or different aspects of it may strike you when you hear it all at one time and inflected and embodied by an actor. This effect involves the oral tradition of storytelling as well as the literary and performance elements.

When the gospels were written, most people could not read, so they heard the gospels read aloud. The oral element is historically authentic in experiencing the story.

Imagine yourself in the late 1st century CE hearing this story. Compare that effect to its effect now. What if this man just lived?

- the writer ("Luke") as storyteller

Luke tells the story of Jesus's life and teaching and of his death and resurrection in chronological order, presenting what he considers to be facts ("the certainty of those things…," 1:4) and suggests their import.

- Jesus as storyteller in the parables

Jesus is a master storyteller, using stories to make his points in oral, not written, form. Storytelling is the major way he teaches.

Parables in the Gospels

Book	#	# unique
Matthew	23	11
Mark	8	2
Luke	24	18

The Gospel of John uses allegories but not the same kind of parable.

Ask the Basic Storytelling Questions

- What is the story here?
- How is it told? How is the story shaped?
- What order is it told in?
- Who tells it?
- Who is it about? What is it about?
- Who or what drives the action?
- Is there a protagonist and antagonist of any sort—individuals, groups, forces?
- What images become important?
- What issues and values build its meaning?

The Storyteller Known as Luke

- Luke addresses his gospel to Gentiles, that is, to non-Jews and not to Jews as Matthew and Mark do. Thus we sense the expansion of the ministry's focus and the spreading of the beliefs, practicing exactly what Jesus preached, for he preached to Jews and Gentiles alike.
- Because he wrote to Gentiles, many scholars see his being concerned with fitting in with Roman society, being able to be both followers of Jesus and decent Romans, too.
- Since he did not know Jesus personally, Luke works as a bit of an historian, first gathering testimony and facts about Jesus and then in *Acts* presenting how the ideas spread into the formation of the early church. It has been called a two-volume work and the first history of the church.

Jesus instructing the disciples
by Duccio Di Buoninsegna

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE
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Narrative Elements in *The Gospel of Luke*: The Opening

The angel's role here offers a visual argument for the divine inspiration of Luke's gospel, "not mine but Thine."

Raphael, part of The Sistine Madonna, *now in Dresden. For an analysis and more detail of this famous painting, see:* https://www.artble.com/artists/raphael/paintings/sistine_madonna

Author and Audience

• The gospel opens with **direct address**, establishing a strong sense of speaker and provenance.

The author says others, many of them eyewitnesses to the events, have written about them, yet he, too, wants to share his understanding. Does he suggest that the reader likely knows these other accounts? There is **a first-person presence** at this point in establishing the narrative, vouching for his care. (Matthew, although the title implies it is the apostle, reports his own calling in third-person [9:9], like all other such reports. Why do that?)

He addresses his reader by name, **Theophilus**. Traditionally, this is identified as a Roman benefactor, a Gentile [there are a number of scholarly theories about this identity], but scholars also ask whether Theophilus (the Greek literally means “beloved or friend of God/loving God”) might instead refer to a Christian community Luke is writing.

A Gentile readership opens one of the themes of this gospel, that **Jesus preaches to both Jew and Gentile**, and much of his salvation effort is focused on the "lost," especially the Gentiles. A number of the parables underscore that of course the faithful will be rewarded, but it is crucial to find and save those lost sheep, that lost coin or lost, prodigal son.

Birth Announcements and Births

• Once into the narrative itself, the author sets up a dual or comparative tale, focusing on John the Baptist and then Jesus. First, John's unlikely conception by an elderly couple is presented, then Jesus's immaculate conception, both announced well in advance by an angel. Matthew told the story of the angel speaking to Joseph; Luke tells of Gabriel visiting Mary. These instances provide a useful contrast about receiving the "call."

• John and Jesus are kin, distant cousins in family terms, and also kin in their preaching and values. Jesus's life is privileged in *Luke*, of course, but we get views of similar missions.

Thinking about Opening Events

• How does the angel Gabriel approach the human in each instance (in *Matthew* and in *Luke*)? What is said and how?

• How does the human respond? What does each ask; do they ask the same thing? How does the angel respond to each?

• There is another angel visit associated with Jesus's birth in Luke's account—to the shepherds. How does that appearance and their response compare to the other two?

• In addition to verbal responses, we get "songs" or poems about the births—Mary's 'Magnificat' and Zacharias's sudden flood of praise once his son John is named. What is the role and effect of these "songs" in the gospel?

• When he hears of Jesus's ministry, Luke says John sent disciples to ask Jesus if he is the one expected. When Jesus says 'yes,' that's apparently enough for John. Compare this moment with the angel announcements made earlier.

• In *Matthew* the birth is foreseen by Wise Men; in *Luke* an angel announces it to nearby shepherds. Is the "good news" being given to shepherds appropriate given the rest of the gospel's emphasis?

• *Luke* gives the gospels' only glimpse of Jesus between birth and ministry. How do the moments narrated fit with the figure and his subsequent actions and values? Did Jesus seem to change (as well as mature) from childhood to manhood or not?

• Where do the incidents of Jesus's childhood occur? Why there? Is that locale used elsewhere in the gospel?

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE
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The Parables: Jesus as Storyteller

In the *Gospel of Luke*, Jesus works as a healer and also as a teacher and a prophet. He has his daring moments, too, such as starting his ministry, according to *Luke*, by walking into the local synagogue in Nazareth and reading from *Isaiah* about being sent to preach gospel to the poor and deliverance to the captives, to heal the broken-hearted and the blind, and then saying this scripture is today fulfilled—and getting himself run out of town. But much of the time he used stories—a parable or exemplum—to suggest what he meant.

The Sermon on the Mount
by Carl Friedrich Bloch

The Jews were waiting for the promised king and the new kingdom and were tired of being subjugated by larger, more powerful empires. They were thinking in this-world terms. Jesus spoke of a kingdom all around them but not of this world, the kingdom of God. To help those who heard him understand the difference between earthly power and God's power and love, Jesus used analogies from everyday life, letting the familiar demonstrate what they could not "see."

Parable vs. Fable

The difference between this world and the next world, the kingdom of God as Jesus describes it, is much like the difference between a fable and a parable. Aesop told **fables**—about the tortoise and the hare or the ant and the grasshopper or the goose that laid the golden egg. Such tales give human traits and even voices to non-human actors—such as animals, insects, or inanimate objects—which always behave just the way humans behave, because that is the point. The stories mirror us and have a moral.

from The Prodigal Son
by Rembrandt

A **parable** uses familiar elements, too, but they use humans in recognizable situations; they are symbolic and teach a moral lesson, and in Jesus's telling refer not so much to how we work as to how God's kingdom works. He suggests that the way something works here is like what happens with God. After all, he is the one who encourages his listeners to address God as "Father." Parables often have spiritual meaning; fables stay away from that realm.

Jesus uses parables but does not always explain exactly how they work; only rarely does he explicate his parables, though most occur in the midst of discussions that give useful context for meaning. Most of them are short and fairly straightforward; some are enigmatic.

Examples of Jesus's Parables in *Luke*:

- *The Parable of the Sower*—Jesus explains this one to his disciples. The seed is sown, he says, and some falls by the wayside, some on a rock, some among thorns, and some on fertile ground; this last seed sprouts and bears fruit. Jesus then says, "The seed is the word of God." Many hear it, but it does not "sprout" in their spirits but gets overcome by sin or worldliness. Some hearts, though, hear the word and it "bears fruit" in their lives.
- *The Good Samaritan*—A Socratic parable, the answer to a lawyer's question about seeking eternal life by loving God and one's neighbor; he asks Jesus, "who is my neighbor?" Jesus tells him of a man robbed and left wounded who is passed on the road by a priest and a Levite, but a Samaritan stops and helps the man. Jesus then asks a question back, "Which was neighbor to the robbed man?" The lawyer replies as we would, "The one who showed him mercy." "Go and do thou likewise," he is told. Answer the need.
- *The Prodigal Son*—The third of three "lost" parables, after the lost sheep and lost coin, this one is the most developed. It shows a worldly self-concern that consumes a life, and when he recognizes his disastrous state, the prodigal returns home in repentance, asking nothing, but his father receives him with love and joy. The faithful son, upset that the wayward brother seems to be rewarded, is reminded that his own fidelity is valued and will gain its reward.

Jesus preaches to both the Jews and the Gentiles, to the spiritually observant and to the lax, but God will welcome all who repent and seek "home."

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE
PERFORMED BY BRUCE KUHN

Narrative Elements: The Ending That Isn't an End

The large center of the *Gospel of Luke* describes Jesus's ministry—choosing disciples, travel, and a lot of healing the ill, preaching, and teaching (healing the mind and spirit) throughout Galilee and beyond. During these chapters a number of people question him about who he is or what he means by his teaching. His answers are usually "you say so" or a parable.

Physical Action

The last three chapters culminate the concerns of these others into action. There is some scholarly discussion about when the passages involving the Jews were written or added, because Christianity's split from Judaism is not always respectful. Dealing with the text as we now have it, however, as Jesus teaches at the Temple in Jerusalem and overthrows the moneychangers' tables, priests and scribes listen and decide they need to stop him by turning him over to the Romans. The Romans are edgy about any disturbance during Passover when crowds are in Jerusalem. The very early experience in the Nazareth synagogue is repeated here on a larger scale, running him out of life, not just out of town, or so they think.

Heroic stories often involve facing death, sometimes by confronting dragons or armies of orcs or three-headed dogs and sometimes by confronting those who disagree with you or who feel you threaten their power. In the *Gospel of Luke*, Jesus speaks of his own death early on; that's part of the plan, part of the prophecy; part of the preparation. In Luke's version, Jesus knows that his body is given for others; he discusses that at the Last Supper, the seder, when he tells the disciples what will happen and how to remember him. God's plan as Jesus understands it is to let it happen, and Jesus prays about it, but the basis of his prayer is "not my will, but thine be done," which is also the basis of the earlier prayer he taught others to pray. Then the crowd with weapons is upon him.

In modern films, this is where Jesus would show he was a Transformer and suddenly become ten times larger, metal-coated, with a fearsome helmet and weapons in each arm. That's not Jesus's way. His "action" is the action of faith, of belief, of the spirit. He has healed and taught, not slaughtered. His death is as much part of that teaching as his life is, in fact, more.

The power structure is interesting here. Jesus has talked to everyone, Jews, Romans, others; he has healed everyone, not just those of one group. Now no group really wants to be responsible for his death. Some want it but don't want to do it; others can do it but say they don't see the need. Yet in the end, he is condemned.

Death by crucifixion was the punishment for petty criminals and minor rebels against the state; respected figures were not killed locally but judged in Rome. They choose to treat him as a nobody. Jesus's ministry had tried to help the blind to see, but physical blindness was not the real problem he addressed. It was spiritual blindness, what we see working here. The people behold, the leaders deride, and the soldiers mock. Yet even in dying one last lesson occurs. One thief joins the crowd and mocks; the other admits wrong, believes, and asks pardon—a figurative "reaching out to his garment" as so many had done earlier in their need. No gory details attend the death; Jesus commends his spirit to God and dies. They bury him Friday afternoon—but it's not over when it looks like it's over. There's one more chapter.

That Last Chapter

On Sunday morning the tomb is empty. The women are told he is not dead, but alive. The disciples are skeptical. Two of Jesus's followers walk to Emmaus that afternoon, and a third figure joins them, who explains the prophecies and the action. At nightfall they ask him to "abide with us," and suddenly they realize it is Jesus, though he then disappears. Jesus appears again to the disciples and explains the idea of repentance and remission of sins. Finally, after that, he ascends to heaven.

But at this point Luke still does not end the story; he keeps writing in the *Book of Acts*, telling the story of the founding of the church. Jesus had sent his followers out to heal and spread the word further during his time in Galilee; now he does it again—telling them to bear witness, teach, and believe in the kingdom of the spirit.

Death by Crucifixion

"Crucifixion was considered such a humiliating form of punishment that if you were a Roman citizen, of course, you couldn't be crucified, no matter what the offense. It was usually the execution of choice ... for slaves and people considered beneath the dignity of Roman citizenship. It was a form of public terrorism.... You would be punished by being hung out publicly, naked until you died. And this sent a very powerful message to everybody else in those quarters … It's a Roman form of execution and it was a public execution on a political charge."

—Allen D. Callaghan,
Harvard Divinity School

Rembrandt, The Crucifixion

"Crucifixion was a very slow and agonizing form of death. It's not from bleeding. It's not from the wounds themselves that the death occurs. It's rather a suffocation because one can't hold oneself up enough to breathe properly, and so over time it's really the exposure to the elements and the gradual loss of breath that produces death."

— L. Michael White,
Univ. of Texas, Austin

Worksheet on Storytelling for Younger Students

LIFE STORIES

• What stories have you read or seen about the life of a real person? Who was it? Explain why you read or watched that one. Did you learn something new about the person? Explain what. Consider how you felt and thought about the person at the end of the book or show. Why?

• Compare that experience with hearing the *Gospel of Luke* in the theatre. Did you learn something about Jesus? How did you feel about his world and his life at the end?

• Describe what do you want to know about the life of someone who made a difference to other people. Does the *Gospel of Luke* let you learn that about the life of Jesus?

• If you are familiar with other stories about Jesus, were all the stories you know in the *Gospel of Luke*? Identify: Which ones that you know did you hear? Which ones weren't there? Consider what the story becomes without them.

• Jesus starts traveling and talking with people. What does he do during his travels and talks? Describe his actions. Consider why the *Gospel of Luke* says he does what he does. Does he do useful or troublesome things?
Many people seek out Jesus and need his help, but some people in the story seem to get upset by what Jesus says and does. Can you tell what upsets them and why?

• What is the relationship between Jesus and his Father (God)? How does he treat him? Address him? How does his Father treat him? Do they listen to each other? Respect each other? How do they communicate? How do Jesus's actions and parables describe being a child of God?

PARABLES AND FABLES

• What fables or stories do you know with talking animals, talking insects or plants, talking cars? Do they behave like animals or cars really behave, or do they behave like we humans behave? What do we learn from these stories?
A parable has a human focus; it deals with things that really happen in our lives, especially in a small town or seaside society like many of the places Jesus visited in Galilee. As you listen to his parables, pick one to think about and decide why he told that story.

• Sowing Grain: This parable appears in *Matthew* and *Mark* as well as *Luke*.
—Jesus describes a sowing process in which the seed falls everywhere and only some of it germinates. Is the sower being wasteful? A farmer would say yes. What is Jesus really talking about with this parable? Is he like the sower? What are his "seeds"? Does he only plant his "seeds" where he knows they are sure to sprout, or does he toss them out a bit in case they sprout wherever they fall? If so, why might he do that? Is Jesus really only talking about seeds?
—Have you germinated seeds at school or home? Get some seeds and plant them in a pot of soil and put it in good light in your classroom and water it carefully. Also sow some in the parking lot, on a dirt path near the school, and in some rocks to see what happens to those.
—Find out how different seeds germinate, how long it takes and in what conditions, and how long it takes each kind of plant to mature. How long will it take you to mature?
—Is a seed a good image? How many things are those seeds like? Kindness? Help? Learning?

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE
PERFORMED BY BRUCE KUHN

Rembrandt, Portrait of Jesus

Art historians discuss this painting as a breakthrough in the way Jesus is painted. Early in church history the relic of Veronica's napkin and another which also claimed to have an image of Christ on it appeared; both had thin, long, angular faces, and that is the way Christ was painted through the Middle Ages. Rembrandt apparently used a local Jewish man as his model for this portrait—a painting he never sold but kept.

Activities for the *Gospel of Luke*

LIFE STORIES

- Have you encountered stories about a good person or a person who made a difference whom you or your family knew? Gather the stories and write a factual account of who this person was/is, what the person did, and why the person was special and should be remembered.

- What is the value of biographies? They are staples of the publishing industry, all over television, and bio-pics are popular in Hollywood. Why? What kind of people do others want to know about? Give examples. How true is the story in each medium? Give examples. Why learn about these people? Have you seen a bio-pic on film or tv that impressed you? What and why?

- If the author *is* Luke, he likely never met or heard Jesus, did not grow up in Judea, was probably not Jewish, and was likely not writing to a Jewish community. How might that affect his view of or presentation of Jesus, which is based, he says, on his talking with others? How reliable is oral testimony when one is trying to found a movement or organization (or church)? How do events look, how are they shaped, when some of them occurred seventy or more years earlier in another cultural context? What do you want to tell your reader(s)?

THEATRICAL NARRATION

- Theatre is a form of active embodiment. In this case, the storyteller embodies both the narrative overview and the voices within it, like an audio book—except we also get to see the body language. What is the difference for you between reading a story and being told the story or seeing and hearing the story come alive? Storytelling began as an oral art form; can we tell its oral roots run deep when we meet it in that form?

- What were the most important, the most surprising, the most moving choices Bruce Kuhn made in performing *The Gospel of Luke*? Describe and analyze their effect.

HISTORY

- Research how the Roman Empire worked in the Middle East, specifically in Palestine, during Herod's and his sons' rule of Palestine. What were Roman policies and priorities for their territories? How were local kings treated? How were local populations treated? What was important for Rome? What was important for Herod and his sons?

- How important was the new Temple in Jerusalem? What kinds of experiences does Jesus have in the Temple? in synagogues? Where does he do most of his teaching and preaching? Why?

- Jesus speaks, but there is no mention of his writing documents. What does an historian's role (like Luke's) become if there are no hard copies or primary documents?

- What are the Hebraic prophecies about the coming Messiah and his kingdom? What did the Jews expect? Is that who and what Jesus was?

- Much of Jesus's activity is healing. How do we understand such sudden cures as are narrated in *Luke*? And apparently he could give that ability to his disciples?

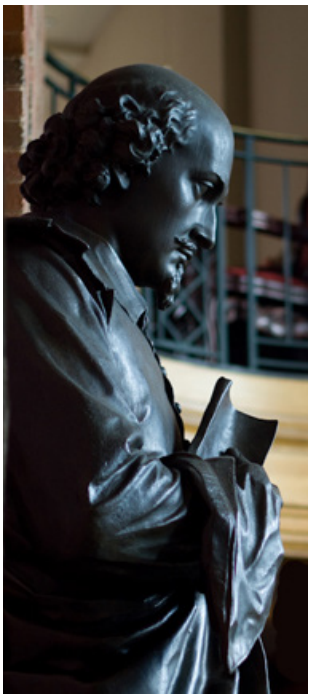
UNDERSTANDING SPIRIT WITH PARABLE

- As a teacher, Jesus's subject is intangible. If the disciple Peter, who was a fisherman, wanted to teach Jesus to fish, he'd show him how to row and sail the boat, work the nets, recognize the habits of the fish and best conditions, and fish with him giving advice. He can show him. Because we cannot put our hands on the kingdom of God in quite the same way we can a fishing net, Jesus has to give examples, tell stories using what we know to help us understand the process, the dynamics, how we need to be part of it.

As you listen to *The Gospel of Luke*, decide which parables seem most effective and why. Analyze your response in a paragraph or two.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

PERFORMED BY BRUCE KUHN



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