

HEARING THE WORD



NIGEL BARGE

Luke 2²¹ – 4³⁰

Work Book

Hearing the Word Luke 2:21 – 4:30 work Book

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Nigel Barge, December 2011

Scripture Quotations taken from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

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Resources

The *New Bible Dictionary* 3rd edition, published by Inter Varsity Press
The *New Bible Commentary* 21st century edition. A commentary on every Bible book, IVP

www.blueletterbible.org

Reading Narrative

In seeking to hear the Word of God throughout the Bible, we need to take into account the *type of literature* in which each part is written. Exodus is mainly narrative (story), the most common type. To approach narrative correctly we need to keep in mind the following principles.

1 In General: It is *God's story*

The whole Bible recounts the story of God's dealings with humankind. After creation and the fall in Genesis, the rest describes how God works out his unfolding plan of salvation for humanity in Jesus. The OT prepares for the arrival, life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The NT recounts these and looks forwards to his return at the end of time. It is *all* about Jesus. Therefore:

a) Every part relates to Him (Luke 24:27; John 5:39).

So as we read, we should be asking – 'what does this show about Jesus; what is He doing?'

b) Everything is relevant.

In a film every scene plays some part in the overall story. Often we are shown things in the early stages that make no sense until later. The Bible is the same. So as we read Bible narrative – knowing how it ends – we should be asking 'what relevance has *this* part of the story to the *main* story?'

2 In particular: 'Follow the camera angle'

A film director focuses the viewer's attention on particular shots to tell 'his story'. In the same way each narrator in the Bible is selective about what to tell us. They leave out much general detail, only giving us what is relevant to what they are trying to convey.

As we read we should therefore be asking the question, 'Why is he telling me this and in this particular way?'

3 Warts and all

Human beings often get things wrong. The Bible narrative faithfully records errors, even by people who are elsewhere commended. For instance, Moses murdered a man, King David committed adultery, and Peter, who was praised for realising Jesus was the Christ, was minutes later roundly scolded when he tried to stop Jesus being the Christ through suffering! (Exodus 2:12; 2 Samuel 11; Matthew 16:16-23)

So we can't treat every thought or action in a narrative as something to copy, just because 'it's in the Bible'. We must ask the Holy Spirit to use the rest of Scripture to discern good examples to follow, and bad ones to avoid.

Background to Luke's Gospel

The Author

Luke was a doctor and friend of the apostle Paul, who calls him 'the beloved physician' and 'fellow worker' (Colossians 4:14; Philemon 1:24). He began to travel with Paul at Troas (Acts 16:10). He was close to Paul near the end of his life (2 Timothy 4:11).

He may have come from Antioch in Syria, or Troas, or Philippi in Macedonia. He was a Gentile (i.e. not a Jew). Indeed he is the only non-Jewish writer in the New Testament.

He had carried out careful research (see Luke 1:3, 2:51). He also wrote the story of the early church in the 5th book of the New Testament, whose full title is: 'The Acts of the Apostles'. It takes us up to Paul's imprisonment in Rome but not his trial, suggesting Luke finished writing it before that event

The Date of writing

Luke wrote his gospel before he wrote Acts (see Acts 1:1), probably before 63AD.

The structure

A	The introduction	(1: 1 - 4)
B	The birth of Jesus	(1:5 - 2:52)
C	The start of Jesus' ministry	(3:1 - 4:13)
D	Jesus in Galilee	(4:14 - 9:50)
E	From Galilee to Jerusalem	(9:51 - 19:44)
F	Jesus in Jerusalem	(19:45 – 21:38)
G	The death of Jesus	(22:1 – 23:56)
H	The resurrection of Jesus	(24:1 - 53)

Its purpose

Matthew and Mark probably wrote their gospels before Luke. Unlike them Luke had not himself witnessed Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection, but he had personal contact with many eyewitnesses who had. He addresses both his Gospel and Acts to someone called Theophilus. This may have been a real individual: could he have been an official in Roman government?... Someone who wanted details of Christianity before Paul's trial in Rome?... Someone who paid Luke's expenses while writing? Actually, the name means, 'friend of God', so it might refer to anyone, in any time or place, who *wanted to know the Gospel and be a friend of God*.

The Themes

Five themes keep re-occurring in Luke's Gospel:

1 Salvation

- a) a historical event

Jesus Christ's coming to earth as a man is the centre point of history. Luke points out the exact time and situation of Jesus' birth. (Luke 2). Jesus sets his face towards Jerusalem (9:51) where he completes his work, commits his Spirit to the Father, and dies (23:46). On the third day he rises from death. Forty days later, having promised to return, he ascends to heaven (Acts 1:9-11). Meantime, the Good News of this salvation is offered to all by the power of the Spirit (Acts 2:38,39).

- b) for all mankind

From the announcement by the angels of 'good news ... for all people' (2:10) to the genealogy of Jesus stretching back to Adam (3:38), it is clear the non-Jews are included too. This does not deny the importance of Israel. Luke begins and ends his Gospel with people in Jerusalem and shows it to be the ultimate destination of Jesus' earthly ministry (1:8; 2:22, 36; 9:51-53; 13:22; 17:11; 18:31; 19:28).

2 The 'outsiders'

Luke shows that people seen as 'weak' are equally welcome in the Kingdom of God, by recording Jesus' interaction with them. This includes:

- a) Women

Women are central to the story. At the beginning, the angelic announcement of His birth was to Mary (1:26-38) and at end, the truth of His resurrection was given first to the women at the tomb (24:1-11). He ministered to women in various settings (7:11; 7:37; 13:11; 21:1-4) and it was women who helped finance Him and His apostles (8:2-3).

- b) Children

The accounts of Jesus' birth show the importance and value of a child from the womb (1:41!). At various times he intervenes to heal the child of a distraught parent (7:12; 8:42; 9:38)

- c) The poor

Jesus himself was from Nazareth (4:16) – a poor, insignificant town (John 1:46). His birth was to an unmarried girl and witnessed by the 'outcasts' of society, the shepherds (2:8-20). The offering at His birth was that of the poor (2:24; Leviticus 12:8) and the message he preached was for the poor (4:18; 7:22). He died with common criminals (23:32,41).

d) Gentiles

Luke, himself a Gentile, is writing to another Gentile, Theophilus (1:3). He records the faith of a Gentile Roman Centurion: Jesus says he had 'not found such great faith in Israel' (7:9). Possibly out of deference to his non-Jewish readership, Luke seldom quotes the Old Testament.

3 The Holy Spirit

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is explicit throughout the Gospel, in:

- a)** the birth of John the Baptist (1:15,41,57) **b)** the conception of Jesus (1:35)
- c)** the prophecy about Jesus by Simeon (2:25-27) **d)** John's promise that Jesus would 'baptise with the Holy Spirit' (3:16) **e)** the baptism of Jesus (3:22) **f)** the temptations of Jesus (4:1) **g)** the power of Jesus' ministry (4:18) **h)** the joy of the Spirit (10:21) **i)** the promise of the Spirit for His followers (11:13; 12:10-12; 24:49). This promise was fulfilled at Pentecost, as Luke records in Acts 2.

4 The humanity of Jesus

There is no clearer way of demonstrating Jesus' humanity than noting his recourse to prayer. Through this he shows:

- a) his own dependence on the Father through prayer (3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28, 29; 10:21; 11:1; 22:39-46; 23:34, 46).
- b) his identification with his disciples, as He similarly instructs them in prayer through
 - i) parables - the friend at midnight (11:5-13) the unjust judge (18:1-8); the Pharisee and the tax collector (18:10-14)
 - ii) teaching on prayer (6:28; 11:2; 22:40, 46)

5 The deity of Jesus

Luke presents Jesus as God in an *oblique* way. This fact was not acknowledged at that time. This is the key theme of the first 5 chapters:

1:17 John prepares for the Lord

1:32 called Son of the Most High

1:43 Mary mother of 'my Lord'

2:11 Saviour who is Christ the Lord

2:49 in 'His Father's house'

3:22 God says 'you are my Son';

4:34 The Holy one of God

4:41 the Son of God

5:8 the Holy presence

5:13 able to cleanse an individual

5:20 a forgiver of sin

5:32 (righteous one) calling sinners to repentance

5:34 the bridegroom

Study 1

Luke 2:21-40

Jesus presented in the Temple

Background

Regulations were given for circumcising baby boys on the 8th day, and the timing and sacrifice necessary for their parents to redeem (buy back) their first born son, that had been claimed by the Lord (Exodus 13:2,12), on the 40th day.

Word List

21	<i>circumcise</i>	removal of foreskin. OT token of God's grace: he chooses and marks men as his own. Sign that the covenant between God and Israel applied to this man
	<i>Jesus</i>	Greek for Hebrew name <i>Joshua</i> , means 'God saves'
22	<i>purification</i>	ritual for a woman's cleansing after childbirth
	<i>Law of Moses</i>	the first five books of the OT
	<i>Jerusalem</i>	capital and site of the Temple
	<i>Law of the Lord</i>	a term similar to 'the Law of Moses'
25	<i>Simeon</i>	a common name; no other NT reference to <i>this</i> one
	<i>righteous</i>	i.e. behaved well towards other people
	<i>devout</i>	i.e. careful about religious duties
	<i>consolation of Israel</i>	the coming of the Messiah
26	<i>Christ</i>	Greek for Hebrew <i>Messiah</i> means 'the Lord's anointed'
27	<i>custom of the law</i>	the five shekels paid to redeem the first-born, <i>see</i> Numbers 18:8,14-16
32	<i>Gentiles</i>	i.e. non-Jews
	<i>Israel</i>	the Jews
36	<i>Anna</i>	Greek form of Hebrew name Hannah, means grace

Bible Connections

21	<i>circumcision</i>	<i>see</i> Genesis 17:1-14
	<i>born under the law to redeem those under the law</i>	<i>See</i> Galatians 4:4-7
22	<i>purification, 40 days for boy, 80 for girl</i>	<i>see</i> Leviticus 12:1-4
23	<i>consecration of firstborn males</i>	<i>see</i> Exodus 13:2,12; Numbers 18:15
30	<i>God's salvation</i>	<i>see</i> Isaiah 40:5; 52:10
32	<i>light for the Gentiles</i>	<i>see</i> Isaiah 42:6; 49:6
34	<i>fall and rise of many in Israel</i>	<i>see</i> Isaiah 8:14,15; 1 Corinthians 1:23-24

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

What surprises or confuses you?

2) The Context

What other parts of the Bible – surrounding passage, individual book, whole Bible, or Bible story – might help you understand this passage?

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions the passage raises?

- 2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?
- 3) Give an overall ‘picture’ of the passage in a few sentences.

LISTEN

- 1) What is the lesson or the main point?
- 2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? v.

LIVE

- 1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?
 - a) His nature and character?
 - b) His grace?
 - c) Jesus and His salvation?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Study 2

Luke 2:41-52

The boy Jesus at the Temple

Background

We know nothing of Jesus' boyhood apart from this one incident, which Luke alone relates. All Jewish adult males were expected to attend the Temple in Jerusalem for three annual festivals, at Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles (Exodus 23:14-17). Most made the effort once a year. At other times, they worshipped every week in their local synagogue.

Jewish boys could become a 'son of the law' (*Bar Mitzvah*) and a full member of the synagogue when they were thirteen. They then assumed all the responsibilities to keep the covenant implied in their circumcision.

In later practice, women and children travelled ahead; the men and older boys took up the rear. If this were the case here, Jesus would have gone up with Mary; whereas on the way home, she would have assumed he was now with Joseph. Each thought he was with the other parent. Confusion!

Word List

41 *Feast of the Passover* remembering how God brought Israel out of Egypt and into the Promised land (Exodus 12).

43 *the boy* greek *pais* (note progression from *brepbos* v16 meaning 'baby', to *paidion* v 40 meaning 'little boy', then *pais* v 43).

46 *temple courts* Temple precincts, used as area for teaching.

46 *questions* asking questions was the normal teaching method.

Bible Connections

47 *amazed at Jesus' understanding* *see also* Matt 7:28; 13:54; 22:33; Mark 1:22; 6:2; 11:18; Luke 4:32; John 7:46

50 *not understanding Jesus* *see also* Mark 9:32 9:45; 18:34; John 12:16

51 *Nazareth – a backwater* *see* John 1:46 *c.f.* Phil 2:8

52 *Jesus growing in wisdom and stature* *see* 2:40
c.f. 1 Samuel 2:26 Proverbs 3:4

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Study 3

Luke 3:1-20

John the Baptist prepares the way

Background

All the Gospels tell us that John the Baptist's ministry prepared the way for that of Jesus and that it was characterised by a call to repentance.

Before John the Baptist, baptism was already being given to Gentile women wanting to become Jews; Gentile *men*, of course, were circumcised. John's innovation was to invite men and women who were *already Jews* to be baptised, as a sign they were repenting of their sins (Luke 3:1-20). He also distinguished it from the Baptism which would come after him.

Luke carefully dates the beginning of John's ministry and all that followed, setting it firmly in secular history. Scholars estimate the date as AD 27-29. Later, Christians dated events from the supposed date of the birth of Jesus, Before Christ (BC) or after (AD means *anno domini* which means 'in the year of the Lord').

Word List

1	<i>Tiberias Caesar</i>	Roman emperor, AD 14 -37
	<i>Pontius Pilate</i>	Roman governor of Judea AD 26-36
	<i>Herod</i>	Herod Antipas, (son of Herod the Great) 4 BC – AD 39
	<i>Iturea and Traconitis</i>	area NE of Sea of Galilee; Philip ruled here from 4 BC to 33/34 AD
	<i>Abilene</i>	Area north of the regions mentioned above
	<i>Lysanias</i>	Nothing else is known about him.
2	<i>Annas</i>	High Priest in Jerusalem AD 6-15. Deposed by Romans, but still had power and influence
	<i>Caiaphas</i>	High Priest AD 18-36, son-in-law of Annas
	<i>John, son of Zechariah</i>	see Luke 1:5-25, 57-80
3	<i>baptism</i>	Symbolic cleansing, already in use at this time for Gentile women who wanted to convert to Judaism
8	<i>stones/ children</i>	There is a play on words here: in Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke, the words sound similar.
	<i>Abraham</i>	The 'father' of the Jewish nation. See God's promise to him in Genesis 15
15	<i>the Christ</i>	The Messiah, the anointed one
16	<i>sandals...untie</i>	A slave's job

Bible Connections

1	<i>an ordered account</i>	Luke 1:1
2	<i>The Word of God came to John cf. Jeremiah 1:2; and 1:1 of Hosea Joel, Jonah, Micah, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.</i>	
3	<i>baptism, repentance, forgiveness of sins</i>	<i>see Zechariah 13:1; Ezekiel 36:25f; Acts 2:38</i>
4-6	<i>prophecy fulfilled</i>	Luke quotes Isaiah 40:3-5
7-9	<i>God's wrath and judgement</i>	<i>see Romans 1:18-2:16</i>
8	<i>Abraham as father</i>	John 8:37
16-18	<i>John points to Jesus and His ministry.</i>	John 3:22-36 Acts 18:24 -19:7

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Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

The Baptism and Genealogy of Jesus

Background

Jesus begins His public ministry by being baptised by John. He did not have any sin of his own to repent of – elsewhere the NT says He was without sin (Hebrews 4:15, 7:26-28) – so John was reluctant (Matthew 3:13-15). Scholars think Jesus was identifying Himself with the sinners He came to save. Just as he would later *die* in place of sinners, His baptism by John implied He also *repented* on behalf of those who would later trust in Him.

In the Old Testament and first century AD, Jews carefully preserved their genealogical tables. Luke here gives us Jesus' family tree through His mother, *Mary*, who was descended from King David. He wants us to know that Jesus is the Son of God.

Word List

23 *about thirty years old* age at which Levites began their ministry (Numbers 4:47)

Bible Connections

21 *Jesus was baptised too.* *See* Matthew 3:13-15

22 *God confirms Jesus' Sonship*, - combining Psalm 2:7 about a victorious Messiah, and Isaiah 42:1, about a servant who suffers. *See also* the Transfiguration Luke 9:28-36; Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8

Jesus asks the Father to glorify His name. *John* 12:23-33; 17:1

23 *genealogical table* compare this with Matthew 1:2-16 which shows that *Joseph*, the legal father of Jesus, is also descended from David. Matthew, writing mainly for Jewish readers, starts with Abraham, the founder of the Jewish race. Luke, with his Gentile readership, goes right back to Adam.

A Bible with cross references will show where to get more detail about the famous names in this list, but don't get bogged down: *See* 1 Timothy 1:3-5

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- 2) What should I do?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Study 5

Luke 4:1-13

The temptation of Jesus

Background

Before he began his public ministry, Jesus spent time alone in the desert, reflecting on God's word in the Old Testament, and the words he had heard at his baptism (Luke 3:22). God had quoted two strands of OT prophecy, about a victorious king, and a servant who suffered.

What sort of Messiah was he to be? How was he to use his powers?

For personal convenience?

For establishing a mighty empire on earth?

For working spectacular, if pointless, miracles?

He rejected all these as temptations of the devil.

Word List

3	<i>devil</i>	Greek <i>diabulos</i> , in hebrew <i>satan</i> meaning adversary or slanderer
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Bible Connections

2	<i>Adam was tempted to eat.</i>	<i>see Genesis 3:1ff</i>
	<i>Jesus was tempted like us.</i>	<i>see Hebrews 4:15; 2:14-18</i>
3	<i>God's ways is not ours .</i>	<i>see Isaiah 55:8</i>
	<i>the foolishness of God (crucifixion), wisdom of man</i>	<i>1 Cor 1:22ff</i>
3,9	<i>'If you are the Son of God'</i>	<i>see Luke 3:22</i>
4,8,12	<i>Jesus' use of Scripture</i>	<i>see Deuteronomy 8:3; 6:13; 6:16</i>
5	<i>The kingdom of evil</i>	<i>see John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Ephesians 2:1-13; 6:11-12; 1 John 5:19</i>
	<i>Christ's kingdom</i>	<i>see John 18:36; Matt 26:51-55; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5</i>
	<i>by-product of seeking Christ's kingdom first:</i>	<i>Matthew 6:33</i>
	<i>satan in religious guise</i>	<i>see 2 Corinthians 11:13-15</i>
11	<i>satan misuses Scripture.</i>	<i>see Psalm 91:11-12</i>
13	<i>the devil left him until an 'opportune' time.</i>	<i>see Luke 8:12; 10:18; 11:18; 13:16; 22:3,31; Mark 8:32-33</i>

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Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

Now underline the application

Jesus rejected at Nazareth

Background information

From 4:14 to 9:50, Luke gives us an account of Jesus' ministry in Galilee. Much of this information is also given in Matthew and Mark, but Luke alone describes in detail what happened in Jesus' home town of Nazareth, soon after Jesus was baptised and tempted (cf v.23).

Thanks to Luke, we hear Jesus explaining from Isaiah's prophecy the kind of ministry he would exercise, as someone who came to bring salvation not only to the Jews but to all who believe in him.

Word List

14	<i>Galilee</i>	North Palestine; well-watered by streams from mountains further north; much of it fertile; dense and prosperous settlement; exported olive oil, cereals and fish.
16	<i>Nazareth</i>	a town in Galilee, about 25 miles west of Sea of Galilee.
	<i>Sabbath</i>	seventh day of the week; Jewish day of rest, running from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday.
	<i>Synagogue</i>	jewish place of meeting for worship in a locality. From a greek verb meaning <i>to gather together</i> .
19	<i>Year of the Lord's favour</i>	ie the era of salvation.
23	<i>Capernaum</i>	village on NW shores of Sea of Galilee; the first village west of where the R Jordan entered the lake.
25	<i>Elijah</i>	notable OT Prophet <i>see</i> 1 Kings 17-19; 2 Kings 1-2.
26	<i>Zarephath</i>	a small Phoenician town in Sidon, ie not part of Israel.
26	<i>Elisha</i>	Elijah's successor <i>see</i> 2 Kings 2:1 – 9:13.
27	<i>Naaman</i>	commander of Syrian army during the reign of Ben-hadad <i>see</i> 2 Kings 5.

Bible Connections

18f *Elijah & the widow of Zarephath*, 1 Kings 17:7-24 Isaiah 61:1-2; 58:6
(c.f. 18-19 with the questions in Study 5...What sort of Messiah had Jesus to be?)

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Sharing the Word

Use

'Hearing the Word' can be used alone, with another, or in a group.

Preparation

Time put in alone beforehand will greatly benefit time spent together.

Work through the stages - LOOK, LEARN, LISTEN, LIVE. *

Write down your own questions and answers.

(With good preparation and discipline in the time together, the study may be conducted in as little as 45 mins!)

Format

- a. LOOK - Any questions? (If answer is known or not)
Relevant cross references in rest of the Bible?
- b. LEARN - Answers to questions?
- c. LISTEN - Key verse and Main Point?
- d. LIVE - What does it show about God /His grace/ Jesus?
What should I do

n.b. Leave plenty of time for the LIVE section!

By also eating together and a time of prayer, you will have shared something of the life of the early church! (Acts 2:42-47)

Remember!

As we gather round God's Word -

- a) Listen to the views of others.
- b) Make room for the novice. (They can join in too when you start by listing 'Any questions'.)
- c) Don't let the 'knowledgeable' dominate. Encourage everyone to think for themselves.
- d) Try to include others, especially 'seekers', in your time together.

* The **process** is explained and practised in a four-hour course, suitable for all, called '**An Introduction to 'Hearing the Word'**

<https://hearingtheword.org.uk>

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