

Introduction to Luke's Gospel: JESUS CAME TO SEEK AND TO SAVE THE LOST

“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” (Lk 19:10)

Author, Date and Place of Writing

The author's name does not appear in the book. But from ancient times, church tradition has unanimously acknowledged Luke as the author of this gospel and its companion, the book of Acts. Luke is referred to as “our dear friend Luke, the doctor,” and “my fellow worker,” by Paul (Col 4:14; Phm 24). He seems to have joined Paul's second missionary journey at Troas before going to Macedonia, and remained a faithful companion throughout Paul's ministry, serving the work of evangelism together (note the “we” sections in Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16). During Paul's second imprisonment, just before his martyrdom, it seemed that many had deserted Paul. At that time, Paul wrote, “Only Luke is with me” (2Ti 4:11). It seems that Luke was greatly influenced by Paul in his understanding of the gospel. Traditionally, Luke was thought to be a Gentile from Syrian Antioch.¹ Among the four gospel writers, he is the only Gentile. He was not an eye-witness of Jesus' life and ministry, but an historian who interviewed eye-witnesses and carefully researched Jesus' life and ministry and recorded an orderly account of it. His vocabulary and descriptive way of writing reveal his keen observation as a physician and advanced education.

It is clear that Luke wrote his gospel before the book of Acts (Ac 1:1). Since Acts ends with Paul's first Roman imprisonment, it seems likely that Luke wrote his gospel in early A.D. 60's before Paul's martyrdom. While the place of writing is unknown, Syrian Antioch and Philippi have been suggested as possibilities.

Genre and Style of Writing

Luke is one of four gospels, and one of three synoptic gospels. All of the gospels focus on who Jesus is, what he taught, and what he did—especially his trial, death and resurrection. But each one has a distinct perspective. Among them, Luke is an historical narrative, which traces God's work, focusing on Jesus as the main figure in all of history.

Recipients

Among the gospels, only Luke directs his writing to a specific recipient, “Theophilus” (Lk 1:3; Ac 1:1). His name means “beloved of God,” or “one who loves God.” His title, “most excellent” implies a high position, usually accompanied by wealth (Ac 23:26; 24:3; 26:25). He had been taught the gospel

¹ Eusebius, in his work, “Ecclesiastical History,” says Luke was “by race an Antiochian and a physician by profession.”

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and believed. It is possible that he was Luke's patron, who supported the publication and distribution of his work. Luke's intention was to spread this gospel to all nations. In Simeon's song, Luke described the meaning of Jesus' birth as the light for the Gentiles and glory for the people of Israel (Lk 2:32). After his death and resurrection, the Risen Christ commanded his disciples to preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Lk 24:47). It is clear that ultimately the gospel was intended not only for a specific person, "Theophilus," but to all who are beloved of God.

Purpose of Writing

The apostles and eyewitnesses had been teaching the stories of Jesus for decades, but Luke seems to be concerned that there was not a thorough, orderly account. Since he himself had carefully investigated everything from the beginning, Luke felt compelled to write an orderly account about Jesus' life, teachings, death and resurrection. In this way he wants the recipients to know the certainty of the unchanging truth about Jesus based on the historical facts (1-4). Luke also wrote with an evangelistic purpose. He proclaimed Jesus as the Savior of the world, the Messiah, the Lord (2:10-11). Luke ends his gospel with Jesus' words to his disciples after his death and resurrection, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things" (24:46-48).

Main Theme

When we study Luke's gospel, it seems that there are many themes. But the main theme is that Jesus is the Savior King. First of all, Jesus is the Savior who came to seek and to save the lost. The words "Savior," "salvation," and variations of "save" appear 18 times in this book, more than any other book of the New Testament (1:47,69,71,77; 2:11,30; 3:6; 6:9; 7:50; 8:12; 9:24; 13:23; 18:26; 19:9-10; 23:35,37,39). The word "salvation" has a broad meaning, but Luke emphasized that salvation comes through the forgiveness of sins (1:77; 5:20,24; 7:48; 23:34; 24:47). Those who accept Jesus with repentance and faith receive salvation. This salvation is for all mankind (2:10,32; 3:6; 24:47). It is available to us "Today," which means "here and now" (2:11; 4:21; 19:9; 23:43).

Jesus is not only the Savior, but the King, who restores God's kingdom (1:31-32). In order to establish God's kingdom, Jesus defeated Satan's temptations and drove out many demons by the power of the Holy Spirit (4:4,8,12,35-36,41). Jesus proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God (4:43; 8:1; 9:11). Jesus humbly served many kinds of people, especially the marginalized (4:18; 22:27). Finally,

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Jesus was rejected and suffered and died for our sins and was raised from the dead in order to fulfill the Scriptures (9:22,44; 17:25; 20:17; 22:37; 24:44-46). Jesus ascended into heaven and reigns at the right hand of God the Father (20:42; 24:51). He will come again like the lightning with power and great glory for the full redemption of his people (17:24; 21:27-28). Jesus reigns over his people, and his kingdom will never end (1:32).

Characteristics

1. God is sovereign over human history: When Luke wrote, Rome ruled the world. Yet human history, including the Roman Empire, was just the background for God to work out his redemptive purpose (1:5,52,68; 2:1-2; 3:1-2; cf. Ac 2:23; 4:28).

2. The kingdom of God is “already, but not yet”: All three synoptic gospels proclaim the kingdom of God. Luke especially emphasizes “the good news of the kingdom of God” (4:43; 8:1; 16:16; Ac 8:12). Jesus’ coming into the world is good news because he brought the kingdom of God as a present reality (1:33). The present reality of the kingdom of God is characterized by proclaiming good news to the poor, freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, and release of the oppressed (4:18; 7:22). But this was contrary to the expectations of many who wanted complete immediate fulfillment (17:20-21; 19:11). Jesus taught that we should not stumble because we may not see the visible manifestation of his reign as we expect (7:23). God’s kingdom will be fully realized when Jesus comes again and this is the culmination of human history (17:24; 21:27).

3. The Holy Spirit is present with the Messiah and his people: The Holy Spirit works by filling, inspiring, motivating and empowering many different people, regardless of age, gender or social status (1:15—John the Baptist; 1:35—Mary; 1:41—Elizabeth; 1:67—Zechariah; 2:25-27—Simeon). The Holy Spirit conceived, empowered, directed, and filled Jesus with joy (3:16,22; 4:1[2],14,18; 10:21). The Holy Spirit is given to those who ask and teaches them what to say (11:13; 12:12). The Holy Spirit comes in fulfillment of God’s promise (24:49; cf. Ac 2:17).

4. Luke emphasizes prayer: The word “pray” and variations of it appear 25 times in Luke’s gospel (and 33 times in the book of Acts). Luke showed Jesus praying at his baptism (3:21), while withdrawing to lonely places (5:16), before calling his disciples (6:12), at Peter’s confession (9:18), at his transfiguration (9:28-29), before teaching the Lord’s Prayer (11:1a), for Simon (22:32), and at Gethsemane (22:41,44,45,46). This emphasizes that Jesus, in his humanity, depended on God in prayer. Though Jesus is God, he did not consider equality with God something to be grasped (Php 2:6). But he humbled himself and asked God everything in prayer.

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In this way he showed a good example to us regarding why we need to pray. Luke shows Jesus teaching his disciples what to pray, when to pray, and how to pray (6:28; 11:1b-2; 18:1,10-11; 19:46; 20:47; 21:36; 22:40,46). Luke also includes the prayers of others (1:10,13; 2:37; 5:33).

5. Jesus shows special concern for the marginalized: Luke presents the gospel to all people (2:10,32; 3:6). However, he shows special concern for the marginalized:

- women (1:6-7,27; 2:36; 4:26; 7:37; 8:2-3,48,50; 10:38-42; 13:11; 15:8; 23:27; 24:10)
- widows (2:37; 4:26; 7:12-13; 18:1; 21:2-3)
- children (9:48; 18:16-17)
- Samaritans (9:51-56; 10:25-37; 17:16-19)
- Gentiles (2:32; 4:26-27; 7:9)
- the poor (4:18; 6:20; 7:22; 11:41; 12:33; 14:13,21; 18:22; 19:8; 21:2-3)
- the crippled and demon-possessed (4:35,41; 5:13; 6:18; 7:22; 8:29-30; 9:42; 11:14; 13:10-16; 14:13,21; 18:35-43)
- public sinners (5:27,31-32; 7:29; 7:37; 18:13; 19:9)

Regardless of a person's condition, Jesus took the initiative. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. At the same time, the marginalized are more aware of their need. So they came to Jesus and he welcomed and helped each one.

6. Warnings regarding riches: Throughout Luke's gospel there is a repeated warning about riches. We find examples in Luke's version of the beatitudes (6:24), the parable of the rich fool (12:13-21), the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31), and the story of Zacchaeus the tax collector (19:1-10). Generally, Luke includes more references to money and wealth than the other gospels.

7. Luke emphasizes the importance of Jerusalem: Luke mentions Jerusalem 31 times in his gospel (another 61 times in the book of Acts). This is far more than it is mentioned in any other New Testament book. Jerusalem is important because God's prophecies concerning the Messiah are fulfilled there (13:33-34; 18:31). These include his trial, suffering, death (9:31), resurrection, ascension, the coming of the Holy Spirit (24:49), and the spread of the gospel from there (24:47). At the same time, Luke described Jesus' ministry on the way to Jerusalem in far more detail than other synoptic gospels. The entire account from 9:51-19:27 takes place "on the way to Jerusalem."

8. Luke's view of Jesus' discipleship: While all of the gospel writers emphasize Jesus' disciple raising ministry, Luke has some unique aspects.

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- From the beginning of his ministry, Jesus called Simon in a very personal way. Jesus restored him after failure in fishing by granting a miraculous catch of fish. Through this Simon encountered Jesus as the holy God, and realized he was a sinful man. Then Jesus said: "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people" (5:1-10).
- Luke sees Peter more positively than other gospel writers. Luke does not include Peter's strong reaction to Jesus' teaching about the cross. He uniquely includes Jesus' prayer for Simon to turn back and strengthen his brothers (22:31-32). In describing Peter's denial of Jesus, Luke is milder than other gospel writers. Luke does not include Peter calling down curses on himself (Lk 22:57-60). Luke also includes a special resurrection appearance to Simon (24:34).
- Luke also has a broader perspective of Jesus' disciples. Among the gospel writers, Luke alone includes sending out the 72 (10:1-17), and Jesus' visiting two disciples on the road to Emmaus (24:15).

9. Jesus' teaching in parables: Luke's gospel emphasizes the use of parables in Jesus' teaching. This includes several unique parables:

- Good Samaritan (10:25-37)
- Rich Fool (12:13-21)
- Great Banquet (14:16-24)
- Lost coin (15:8-10)
- Lost son (15:8-32)
- Shrewd manager (16:1-15)
- Rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31)
- Persistent Widow (18:1-8)
- Pharisee and Tax Collector (18:9-14)

10. Unique Narratives in Luke's gospel: As the longest of the four gospels, Luke includes several unique narratives:

- Introduction (1:1-4)
- Zechariah and Elizabeth (1:5-25)
- Jesus' birth announced to Mary (1:26-38)
- Mary's song (1:46-56)
- Zechariah's song (1:67-79)
- Jesus' birth (2:1-20)
- Jesus' presentation (2:21-24)
- Simeon and Anna (2:25-40)

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- Jesus' boyhood (2:41-52)
- Jesus' genealogy (3:21-38)
- Jesus calling Simon (5:1-11)
- Jesus raising the widow's son (7:11-17)
- Jesus anointed by a sinful woman (7:36-50)
- Jesus sends out the Seventy-Two (10:1-17)
- Jesus teaches "repent, or...perish" (13:1-5)
- Jesus heals a woman crippled for 18 years (13:10-17)
- Jesus sorrows for Jerusalem (13:31-35)
- Jesus teaching at a Pharisees' house (14:1-14)
- Thankful leper (17:11-19)
- Jesus saves Zacchaeus in Jericho (19:1-10)
- Jesus' prayer on the cross (23:34)
- Jesus saves a dying criminal (23:39-43)
- Risen Jesus talks with two disciples on the road to Emmaus (24:13-35)

Purpose of Our Study

Through the study of Luke, we want to know and accept Jesus as our Savior and obey his word as our King. We want to know the certainty of what we have been taught so that we can be his witnesses and participate in his kingdom work to seek and to save the lost.

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Outline

- I. Author's Motive and Purpose in Writing (1:1-4)
- II. The Coming of Jesus, the Messiah (1:5-2:52)
 - A. The Announcement of John's Birth (1:5-25)
 - B. The Announcement of Jesus' Birth (1:26-38)
 - C. Mary Visits Elizabeth (1:39-45)
 - D. Mary's Song (1:46-56)
 - E. The Birth and Naming of John (1:57-66)
 - F. Zechariah's Song (1:67-80)
 - G. Jesus Is Born in Bethlehem (2:1-21)
 - H. Jesus Is Presented at the Temple: Simeon and Anna Prophecy (2:22-40)
 - I. The Boy Jesus at the Temple (2:41-52)
- III. The Beginning of Jesus' Messianic Ministry (3:1-4:13)
 - A. John Prepares the Way for the Messiah (3:1-20)
 - B. Jesus' Baptism and Genealogy (3:21-38)
 - C. Jesus Defeats the Devil's Temptations (4:1-13)
- IV. Jesus' Galilean Ministry (4:14-9:50)
 - A. Jesus Proclaims the Good News of the Kingdom of God (4:14-6:49)
 - 1. Jesus Proclaims His Messiahship and Is Rejected in His Hometown (4:14-30)
 - 2. Jesus Preaches the Word, Drives Out Demons, Heals (4:31-44)
 - 3. Jesus Calls Simon Peter and the First Disciples (5:1-11)
 - 4. Jesus Heals a Man with Leprosy (5:12-16)
 - 5. Jesus Demonstrates His Authority to Forgive Sins and Calls Levi (5:17-32)
 - 6. Jesus' Ministry Is Like New Wine into New Wineskins (5:33-39)
 - 7. Jesus Proclaims that He Is Lord of the Sabbath (6:1-11)
 - 8. Jesus Calls Twelve Apostles and Teaches the Disciples (6:12-49)
 - B. Jesus Cares for the Marginalized (7:1-8:56)
 - 1. Jesus Praises the Faith of a Centurion (7:1-10)
 - 2. Jesus Raises the Son of a Widow (7:11-17)
 - 3. Jesus Explains His Messianic Work and Recognizes John's Ministry (7:18-35)

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4. Jesus Teaches about Love and Forgiveness (7:36-50)
5. Some Women Support Jesus' Ministry (8:1-3)
6. Jesus Teaches in Parables (8:4-18)
7. Jesus' View of Family (8:19-21)
8. Jesus Calms the Storm and Restores a Demon-Possessed Man (8:22-39)
9. Jesus Heals a Sick Woman and Raises Jairus' Daughter (8:40-56)
- C. Jesus Teaches His Disciples (9:1-50)
 1. Jesus Sends Out the Twelve (9:1-9)
 2. Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand (9:10-17)
 3. Peter's Confession; Jesus' Prediction of Suffering, Death and Resurrection (9:18-27)
 4. Jesus' Transfiguration (9:28-36)
 5. Jesus Heals a Demon-Possessed Boy (9:37-43a)
 6. Jesus Predicts His Suffering, Death and Resurrection a Second Time (9:43b-45)
 7. Jesus Teaches Who Is the Greatest (9:46-50)
- V. Jesus' Ministry on the Way to Jerusalem (9:51-19:27)
 - A. Jesus Resolutely Set Out for Jerusalem (9:51-13:21)
 1. Jesus is Rejected by the Samaritans (9:51-56)
 2. The Cost of Discipleship (9:57-62)
 3. Jesus Sends Out the Seventy-Two (10:1-24)
 4. Jesus Teaches the Parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25-37)
 5. Martha and Mary (10:38-42)
 6. Jesus Teaches on Prayer (11:1-13)
 7. Jesus Confronts Opposition by the Religious Leaders (11:14-54)
 8. Jesus Warns and Teaches the Crowd, Focusing on His Disciples (12:1-13:9)
 9. Jesus Heals a Crippled Woman on the Sabbath (13:10-17)
 10. Jesus Teaches the Parable of the Mustard Seed and Yeast (13:18-21)
 - B. Jesus Teaches through many Towns on his Way to Jerusalem (13:22-17:10)
 1. Enter through the Narrow Door (13:22-30)
 2. No Prophet Can Die outside Jerusalem (13:31-35)

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3. Healing and Teaching at a Pharisee's House on the Sabbath (14:1-24)
4. The Cost of Being a Disciple (14:25-35)
5. The Parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Lost Son (15:1-32)
6. The Parable of the Shrewd Manager and Other Teachings (16:1-18)
7. The Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19-31)
8. Disciples: Watch Yourselves, Have Forgiving Faith, and Do your Duty (17:1-10)
- C. Jesus Travels along the Samaritan Border on his Way to Jerusalem (17:11-19:27)
 1. Among Ten Healed Lepers, One Samaritan Returns to Thank Jesus (17:11-19)
 2. The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man (17:20-37)
 3. Parables on Prayer: Persistent Widow, Pharisee and Tax Collector (18:1-14)
 4. How to Enter the Kingdom of God: Children Versus a Rich Ruler (18:15-30)
 5. Jesus Predicts His Suffering, Death and Resurrection a Third Time (18:31-34)
 6. Jesus Heals a Blind Man Who Called him "Son of David" (18:35-43)
 7. Jesus Brings Salvation to Zacchaeus the Chief Tax Collector (19:1-10)
 8. The Parable of the Ten Minas (19:11-27)
- VI. Jesus' Ministry in Jerusalem (19:28-21:38)
 - A. Jesus' Triumphal Entry and Cleansing the Temple (19:28-46)
 - B. Jesus' Various Teachings at the Temple (19:47-21:38)
 1. The Parable of the Tenants (19:47-20:19)
 2. Give to Caesar what Is Caesar's and to God what is God's (20:20-26)
 3. God Is the God of the Living (20:27-40)
 4. The Messiah Is the Lord of David (20:41-44)
 5. Jesus Warns His Disciples not to be like the Teachers of the Law (20:45-47)

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6. Jesus Praises a Widow's Offering (21:1-4)

7. Jesus Predicts the Destruction of the Temple and Signs of the End (21:5-38)

VII. Jesus' Suffering and Death (22:1-23:56)

A. The Last Supper (22:1-38)

B. Gethsemane Prayer (22:39-46)

C. Jesus Is Arrested and Peter Denies Knowing him Three Times (22:47-62)

D. Jesus Is Mocked and Beaten (22:63-65)

E. Jesus Is Tried by Pilate and Herod and Sentenced to Death (22:66-23:25)

F. Jesus Is Crucified, Prayed on the Cross, Blessed a Repentant Criminal (23:26-43)

G. Jesus' Death and Burial (23:44-56)

VIII. Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension (24:1-53)

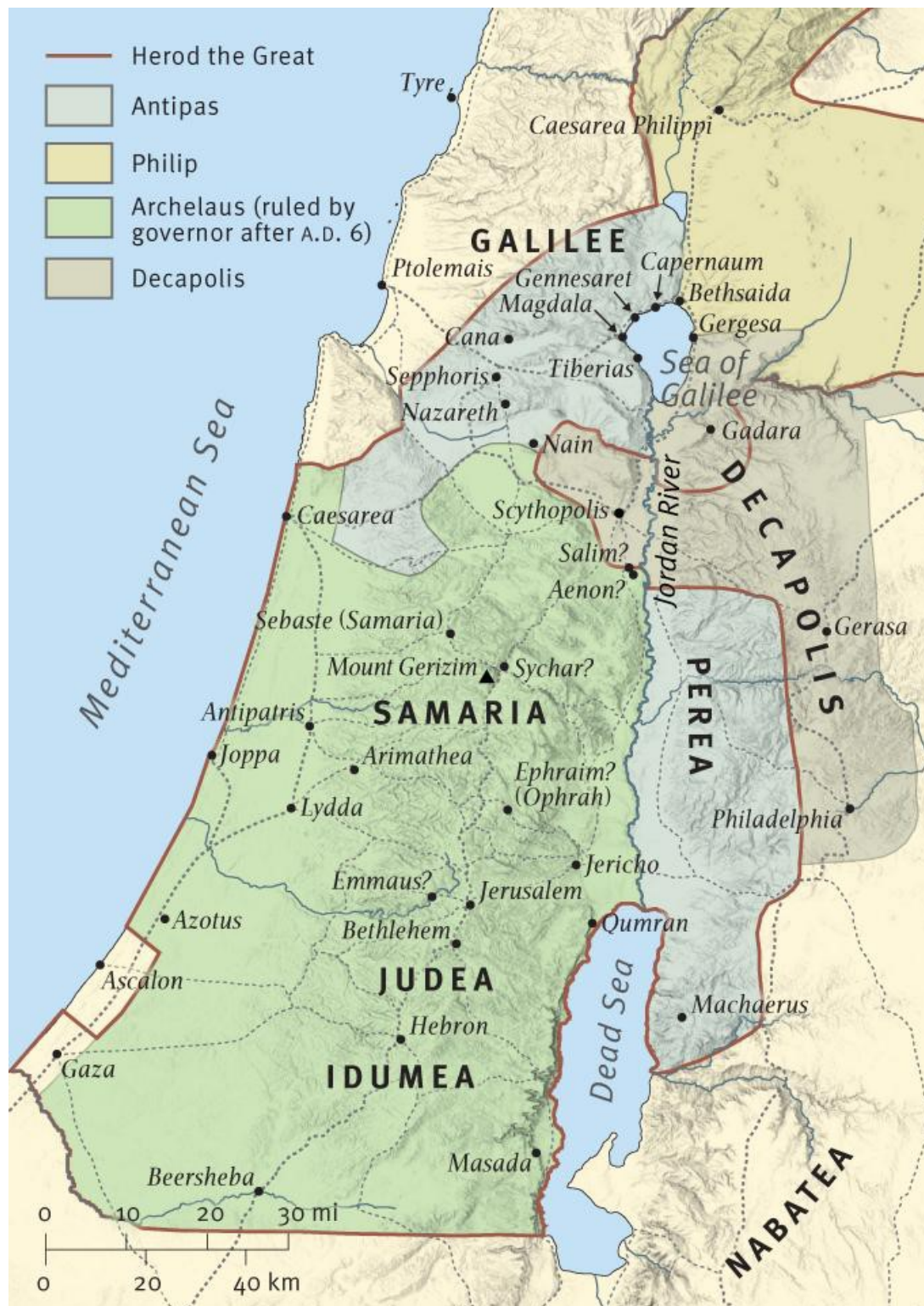
A. Jesus Has Risen (24:1-12)

B. Jesus Appears to and Teaches Two Disciples on the Road to Emmaus (24:13-35)

C. Jesus Appears to the Eleven and Teaches Scripture (24:36-49)

D. Jesus' Ascension (24:50-53)

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