

# BOOKS OF THE BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

by WAYNE PALMER

**L U K E**



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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Gospel of Luke unfolds as a journey—the journey of Jesus Christ from heaven to earth and back to heaven again. Within that journey, Luke follows the earthly life of Jesus Christ as it revolves around the temple of God. He begins with an angel’s visit to a priest offering incense in the temple, then returns to the temple for Holy Week. As Jesus is rejected, tried, and condemned, Luke shifts his focus from the temple building to the temple of Jesus’ body as He is crucified and buried, but then rises from the dead and ascends into heaven. God no longer dwells in the temple in Jerusalem, but in the body of His Son, Jesus Christ.

## **RELATIONSHIP TO THE OTHER GOSPELS**

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are not merely fact-filled biographies of the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Each is written and inspired by the Holy Spirit to convince readers that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, our Savior. The evangelists don’t simply write “what” happened to Jesus, but “why” it happened. Each of the four evangelists emphasized different points as they wrote to different audiences according to their Holy Spirit-inspired purpose.

Matthew, one of Jesus’ Twelve, wrote to Jews. According to early church historians, Matthew wrote his Gospel to the Hebrews so they would have a witness when he went to share the Gospel with other people groups.

Mark, a helper to Peter in Rome, wrote to Romans. Early church historians claimed that Mark composed his Gospel from his recollections of sermons Peter had preached while in Rome.

Luke, a companion on St. Paul’s missionary journeys, was well acquainted with other Apostles. As Luke makes clear in his dedication (Luke 1:1-4), he knew many narratives of Jesus’ life had been hastily written, were incomplete, and in some cases uncertain. So

after interviewing eyewitnesses, Luke set out to organize the material and set it forth in his orderly Gospel narrative.

John, another of Jesus’ Twelve, is said to have written his Gospel after the other three. His purpose was to fill in gaps left behind by the other evangelists—especially the early events of Jesus’ ministry, and certain discourses omitted from the other Gospels.

## **PURPOSE**

Luke wrote his Gospel to a student named Theophilus (“lover of God”) who had been taught the Christian faith. Luke’s purpose is “that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.” Through his careful interviews with eyewitnesses to the life of Jesus, and arranging that material under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Luke grounds the story of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, in human history.

## **OUTLINE**

Luke begins with a brief prologue (1:1–4). This is followed by the infancy of John the Baptist and Jesus (1:5–2:52). The next two chapters present the preparation for Jesus’ Public Ministry (3:1–4:13). Luke then discusses Jesus’ Galilean Ministry (4:14–9:50), then events during His journey to Jerusalem (9:51–19:27). This is followed by Jesus’ ministry in Jerusalem (19:28–21:38), His Passion (22:1–23:56a), and His Resurrection (23:56b–24:53).

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# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## PROLOGUE — LUKE 1:1–4

### **Read 1:1–4**

Luke writes that many people have tried to write narratives about Jesus. Not having been a witness to Jesus' ministry, Luke has closely interviewed many eyewitnesses of the events of Jesus' life, and now has compiled a narrative from those interviews.

### **Q 1: What is Luke trying to accomplish through this narrative?**

- Not just to give historical facts and figures to Theophilus, but to give him certainty about the things he has learned about Jesus and His work to save us.

### **Q 2: How might Luke's career as a physician be great preparation for this work?**

- As a physician, Luke was very concise, detail-oriented, and logical. At the same time, since he was a doctor, Jesus' healing miracles were of special interest to him.

# INFANCY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST AND JESUS — LUKE 1:5–2:52

In order to give a complete narrative of Jesus' life, Luke began with Jesus' infancy. Since Jesus and John the Baptist were closely linked, as were their mothers, he dedicated two chapters to the events of their infancy and childhood.

**Read chapter 1.**

**Q 3: Why do you think Zechariah doubted the angel's promise? Shouldn't the mere presence of the angel have been enough to make him believe?**

- Zechariah put more weight on his experience through decades of disappointment than upon God's promise, or even the glorious appearance of the angel.

**Q 4: What made Mary's response, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" (1:34), different from the doubt Zechariah expressed in 1:18?**

- Mary's question was not "How CAN this happen," but "How WILL this happen." It was actually a question of faith—"this will happen, but how?" She was not expressing any doubt that the virgin birth would occur, she was only wondering how it would come about that she, a virgin, would conceive that child.

Zechariah's question, "How shall I know this," is doubt—and unfounded doubt at that. Mary had every right to ask about a virgin conception which had never occurred before. But Zechariah had no reason to wonder or doubt—the Old Testament had many accounts of elderly couples conceiving children by God's miraculous hand. Zechariah, the priest, should have known better.

As Mary visited Elizabeth and Zechariah, Elizabeth greeted her with these words: "And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"

**Q 5: What things led Elizabeth to so confidently believe that Mary was pregnant with God's Son?**

- Undoubtedly, Zechariah used his writing pad to convey to Elizabeth the content of the angel's message to him. Elizabeth experienced God's own power in her body as she was able to conceive John. And when Mary greeted Elizabeth, John leaped in her womb, and the Holy Spirit entered her and created that knowledge through faith.

Finally, after being unable to speak for nearly a year, Zechariah's speech was restored since all that the angel predicted came to pass.

**Q 6: Why do you think Zechariah spent more time speaking of the coming Christ than his own son?**

- John was merely the forerunner of the Messiah, the one who would prepare the way for Jesus. The far greater, and happier news, was that God's great Son was here at last.

**Read chapter 2.**

**Q 7: Why do you think Luke was so careful to provide the list of rulers and the event of the census that led Mary and Joseph down to Bethlehem?**

- Luke wants to make his readers certain about the things they have learned. So he is careful to show that Jesus was a real historical figure, living in a definite time and place on earth.

After the shepherds visited baby Jesus in response to the angel announcement, Luke wrote, "But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart" (2:19).

**Q 8: How is this response of Mary important for Luke's purposes?**

- Undoubtedly, Luke drew the content of his first two chapters from Mary herself—either speaking to her himself, or speaking to John, who had been charged to take care of Mary after Jesus' death. This verse shows the kind of person Mary was, not one who jumbled up events in her mind and lost details, but one who recognized the great significance of the events as they happened, and committed them to memory. Her story gives the reader great certainty that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and not Nazareth (to fulfill Micah's prophecy) and that He was indeed born of a virgin.

In Luke 2:34–35, after praising God for being permitted to see the Christ child, Simeon prophesied to Mary about Jesus' future rejection and mistreatment at the hands of the Jews.

**Q 9: What is significant about Mary learning this when Jesus was only 40 days old?**

- The fact that Jesus of Nazareth was rejected by the Jewish authorities and crucified by the Roman governor could have made it difficult for new Christians to understand God's purposes, or may have raised serious doubts or second thoughts

concerning whether Jesus really was the promised Messiah or not. But the fact it was prophesied nearly from the beginning helps explain why these things took place.

The story of Jesus' childhood falls silent except for one episode when he was twelve.

**Q 10: What is noteworthy about the account of twelve-year old Jesus in the temple courts?**

- We can see that from an early age, Jesus busied Himself in preparation for His great mission by learning, memorizing, and understanding Scripture. In chapter 4, when Jesus was tempted immediately after His Baptism, he resisted Satan's treachery by quoting three times from the book of Deuteronomy.

# PREPARATION FOR JESUS' PUBLIC MINISTRY — LUKE 3:1–4:13

Luke next jumps to the events which prepared Jesus to begin His public ministry—His Baptism and temptation in the wilderness.

## **Read chapter 3**

Note that Luke again gives us a deep historical grounding, establishing the time in which John's ministry began, and a thorough listing of the ruling officials. Jesus story was not a fairy tale that took place "long ago and far away." It took place in a certain place at a certain time in human history.

As the crowds from Jerusalem came out to him, John immediately confronted their notion that since they had descended from Abraham, they were automatically guaranteed eternal salvation.

### **Q 11: Why was it important for John to confront this Jewish notion?**

- John and Jesus were sent to a people who had been taught they earned their way to heaven by following the rules of the scribes and the Sadducees. John used the strictest terms to shatter that deadly illusion.

Luke is the only Gospel that shares John's answer to the question of the repentant people, tax collectors, and soldiers, "What then shall we do?"

### **Q 12: Was John saying they earned heaven by sharing and making amends for their past sins?**

- No, John baptized them to wash away their sin. Their new, amended life was preparation for Jesus to begin His ministry on a note of Gospel, rather than Law—though Jesus definitely used both Law and Gospel most efficiently. Jesus wanted His ministry characterized by acceptance, grace, and love, not to be dominated by Law and repentance.

Luke gave us little detail when he related Jesus' Baptism. Matthew's account is much richer and more complete. Assuming Luke was familiar with the Gospel of Matthew, perhaps he felt Matthew provided all the information a new student of the faith would need to know.



**Read chapter 4:1–13**

**Q 13: Why was it essential that Jesus used only the Word of God to resist and uncover Satan's temptations?**

- Jesus was tempted as our Substitute—and as the substitute for Adam and Eve. Both Adam and Eve failed their temptation because they did not rely on God's spoken word. Jesus did rely on that word, and succeeded for them and for all of us.

# JESUS' GALILEAN MINISTRY —

## LUKE 4:14–9:50

Matthew, Mark, and Luke record similar events from Jesus' Galilean Ministry. Beginning in this section, we will focus our attention on Luke's unique contributions which are not included in the other Gospels.

Like Luke, Matthew and Mark relate Jesus' rejection when he returned to Nazareth, the town in which He was raised. They point out the rejection occurred because of Jesus' familiarity, and the fact that Jesus did not perform many miracles there because of their unbelief. Only Luke details what Jesus said in the synagogue, what the people said about Him, and how His former neighbors made an attempt on His life.

### **Read chapter 4:16–30**

#### **Q 14: What caused such murderous hatred from Jesus' former friends and neighbors?**

- Jesus exposed their stubborn unbelief based off of familiarity and compared it to the Israelites who rejected Elijah and Elisha.

#### **Q 15: What warning is there for Christians in this?**

- Regular church attendance without careful, prayerful attention can foster this same attitude of familiarity breeding contempt. An example is tuning out because we are familiar with all the Bible readings from having heard them over and over again.

In 6:17–49, we see similar teachings to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount which Matthew records in chapters 5–7 in his Gospel. But Luke adds something Matthew leaves out.

### **Read chapter 6:24–26**

Luke summarizes Matthew's eight beatitudes into four, but he adds four corresponding woes to those beatitudes. Pair up each "blessed" with its corresponding "woe." Pick one pair that jumps out to you.

#### **Q 16: Describe what strikes you about this pair.**

- Each beatitude in each pair offers great promise when we repent of our sins and serve our Lord and our neighbor selflessly. But its corresponding woe shows how easy it is to slip back into sin and a lukewarm feeling of complacency when we should be serving our Lord with fervent love and sincere repentance.

Matthew and Mark record the account of Jesus' raising the dead daughter of the synagogue ruler, Jairus. John records Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. Only Luke records Jesus raising a widow's only son.

**Read chapter 7:11–17**

**Q 17: What is significant about the phrase in verse 13, “And when the Lord saw her he had compassion on her”?**

- The word for compassion is “mercy”. Jesus felt those butterflies in the stomach that we feel when we see something sad. And He was so gracious and loving He had to do something to change the situation. In worship we sing, “Lord, have mercy” after the Confession and Absolution. Since our sins are forgiven already, we are not asking Jesus to be merciful and forgive our sins again. Instead, we are asking Him to look at the things going on in our lives that bring tension, fear, and strife; have mercy on us; and deliver us.

(If you have *Lutheran Service Book*, read the text of hymn 552, “O Christ, Who Shared Our Mortal Life,” stanzas 1, 7–8, and 4).

# JESUS' JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

## — LUKE 9:51–19:27

Unlike Matthew and Mark, Luke places tremendous stress on Jesus' final journey up to Jerusalem to go to the cross to win our salvation. Throughout these ten chapters Luke makes it clear Jesus knows this is His final journey.

### **Read 9:51–56**

**Q 18: What is significant about the phrase “he set his face to go to Jerusalem”?**

- Jesus was determined to fulfill His mission given to Him by His Father to suffer and die for our sins on the cross. Nothing was going to interfere with that. And unlike other Samaritan villages that welcomed Jesus, this Samaritan village refused to welcome Him precisely because His face was set on Jerusalem.

**Q 19: In what parts of your life would it be helpful to live with more of this kind of determination?**

- Answers will vary—it could be in resisting sin; mending relationships; fulfilling responsibilities as a parent, child, or spouse; or witnessing to someone.

Several other significant events occurred during Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem which are recorded only in Luke. One is Jesus commissioning seventy-two followers and sending them out in thirty-six teams of two.

### **Read 10:1–12, 17–20**

**Q 20: Why do you think Jesus recruited this many disciples to witness to the villages on His path?**

- Jesus knew His time to share the Gospel was growing short—especially since the end of His road was Jerusalem and the cross. Through His disciples, Jesus was able to multiply His ministry by thirty-six. This was also a chance for a large number of disciples to get practice for witnessing about Jesus after Pentecost.

Along this journey to Jerusalem, Luke records some important teachings that are found only in his Gospel.

### **Read 10:25–37 (The Good Samaritan)**

Many think Jesus told this parable to teach us how we should treat others. Though it does that, it is not the primary purpose of this parable. Jesus was showing a lawyer that he had not kept the Commandments as he supposed and

needed the forgiveness Jesus was going up to Jerusalem to earn for him and everyone.

**Q 21: How does this parable give a special view of what Jesus does for us?**

- Each sinner is like the man beaten by robbers. We are dying, and without Christ's help, we will perish eternally. The priests and Levites of Jesus' day had the Scriptures and the means to help dying sinners, but passed by on the other side—proclaiming man-made laws rather than God's Gospel. Jesus, rejected by the authorities like a Samaritan, had pity and stopped to save and cure the sinner.

Another popular parable found only in Luke is the third of a set of parables that Jesus directed toward Pharisees and scribes who grumbled that He was associating with tax collectors and sinners.

**Read 15:1–3, 11–32 (Prodigal Son)**

**Q 22: It is easy to see the tax collectors and sinners in the younger son. How does Jesus expose the sin of the Pharisees and scribes through the older brother?**

- Just as the older brother grumbled and complained that his father welcomed back the prodigal brother, the Pharisees and scribes were grumbling about Jesus' forgiveness and acceptance of their wayward brothers. But they did not recognize that they were sinners just as lost as their brothers and needed God's forgiveness too.

# JESUS' MINISTRY IN JERUSALEM

## — LUKE 19:28–21:38

Beginning with Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and through Monday and Tuesday of Holy Week, Luke shows us how Jesus ministered to the Jews in Jerusalem. Luke's details don't differ much from those of Matthew and Mark. But Luke does point out Jesus' popularity in Jerusalem.

### **Read 19:28–48**

**Q 23: Where do you see evidence of Jesus' popularity among the crowds gathering in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover?**

- Verse 37 points out that “the whole multitude of His disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen.” Also, verse 48 points out that all the people were hanging on Jesus' words, preventing the chief priests and scribes from finding a way to destroy Him.

The Jewish leaders were not pleased by Jesus' continuing popularity through the first part of Holy Week. All of their plots to alienate Jesus from the crowds only served to make Him more popular.

### **Read 20:1–44**

**Q 24: Where do you see the growing sense of frustration and helplessness by the Jewish leaders?**

- After verses 19–20 where the leaders perceive that Jesus spoke the parable against them, they try to trip Jesus up with clever traps, but He astounds them by His answers. Then, when He raises a question in verse 41 they can't answer, they realize they will have to wait until He is away from the crowds before they can act against Him.

# JESUS' PASSION — LUKE 22:1–23:56A

Two events in Jesus' trial are unique to Luke's Gospel. The first occurs as Jesus prepares to lead His disciples from the Upper Room at the close of the Last Supper to the Garden of Gethsemane.

**Read 22:35–38**

**Q 25: How is Jesus' tone here different from when He sent the seventy-two disciples out in 10:2–9?**

- When Jesus sent the seventy-two, the villages were, for the most part, receptive to Jesus and His message. But following His death on the cross, the Jewish people would be far more hostile and less open to the message of Jesus Christ and His salvation. Jesus even pointed out the coming hostility by directing His disciples to take two swords with them.

Luke is the only Gospel that records Jesus' hearing before Herod Antipas.

**Read 23:6–17.**

Interestingly, Jesus has nothing to say to the ruler who beheaded John the Baptist.

**Q 26: Why might Luke think it was important to include this trial before Herod?**

- It establishes Jesus' innocence by the finding of two Roman courts—Herod's and Pilate's. The innocent verdict of Pilate is especially important for Luke to establish for Gentile or Roman converts who might dismiss Jesus as a condemned criminal.

The other details of Jesus' trials before the Jews and Pontius Pilate are similar to those recorded in Matthew and Mark. The next major difference is found as Jesus carries His cross to the place of execution.

**Read 23:27–31.**

**Q 27: Why does Jesus tell the women of Jerusalem not to weep for Him?**

- Jesus does not want the women of Jerusalem crying in sympathetic mourning for Him. If they are to cry, it should be in repentance for their sins, that they might find forgiveness and salvation in His suffering and death on the cross.

Luke also records a different set of sayings Jesus makes from the cross, which are not recorded in any other Gospel.

**Read 23:32–34.**

It is strange to think that only Luke records Jesus' prayer for the forgiveness of His persecutors.

**Q 28: Why is this prayer so powerful?**

- The only way the Father can forgive the Jews for killing His innocent Son is to punish Jesus Himself for their sin. It is a prayer of self-sacrifice and selfless love.

**Read 23:35–43.**

Luke lists the various groups who were mocking and ridiculing Jesus, clear up to the one criminal by His side. According to Matthew and Mark, both of these criminals mocked Jesus at first. But Luke tells us the Holy Spirit worked repentance and faith in one of the two.

**Q 29: Why is this passage such a clear example of salvation by faith alone through Christ alone?**

- Because this thief was powerless to amend his life, to do any good deed to atone for his sin. His salvation rested in Jesus Christ and His merits alone. And Jesus assured him he would be in paradise that very day.

Matthew and Mark record Jesus' cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Luke gives us Jesus' final words from the cross.

**Read 23:44–46.**

**Q 30: What difference do you note in the way Jesus addressed God in this passage from Luke from the way He addressed Him in the passage from Matthew and Mark above?**

- By calling God "Father", Jesus shows that the payment for our sins is complete, and He is no longer forsaken by His Father. This, combined with John 19:30 ("It is finished"), proves that Jesus' sufferings were complete before He died on the cross. He did not descend into hell after His death to further suffer for our sins.



# JESUS' RESURRECTION — LUKE

## 23:56B–24:53

Luke reveals some special information about Jesus' resurrection that adds significantly to what we learn from Matthew and Mark. From their Gospels, we might get the impression that only two or three women went to the tomb and saw the angels who announced Jesus' resurrection. Luke 24: 10 indicates these women were all there, along with quite a few more women.

Luke also gives us the wonderful account of the two disciples walking to Emmaus.

**Read 24:13–35.**

**Q 31: What is your favorite part of this walk with Jesus?**

- Answers will vary. Some might indicate the way Jesus let the two disciples express their sorrow; others how He rebuked their unbelief and hard-heartedness, and carefully taught them how His passion and resurrection had been prophesied often in the Old Testament; others may respond to their comment about their hearts burning within them as they walked along the road and Jesus opened the Scriptures to them; others may like the way Jesus went in to stay with them; others may love the phrase, “Stay with us, for it is toward evening”—a source of so many wonderful hymns; still others may love the way they ran back to Jerusalem to report to the Eleven.

Finally, Luke is the only evangelist who records Jesus' ascension (both in Luke 24 and Acts 1).

**Read 24:50–52**

**Q 32: Why might it fit Luke's purpose to include Jesus' ascension when none of the other evangelists did?**

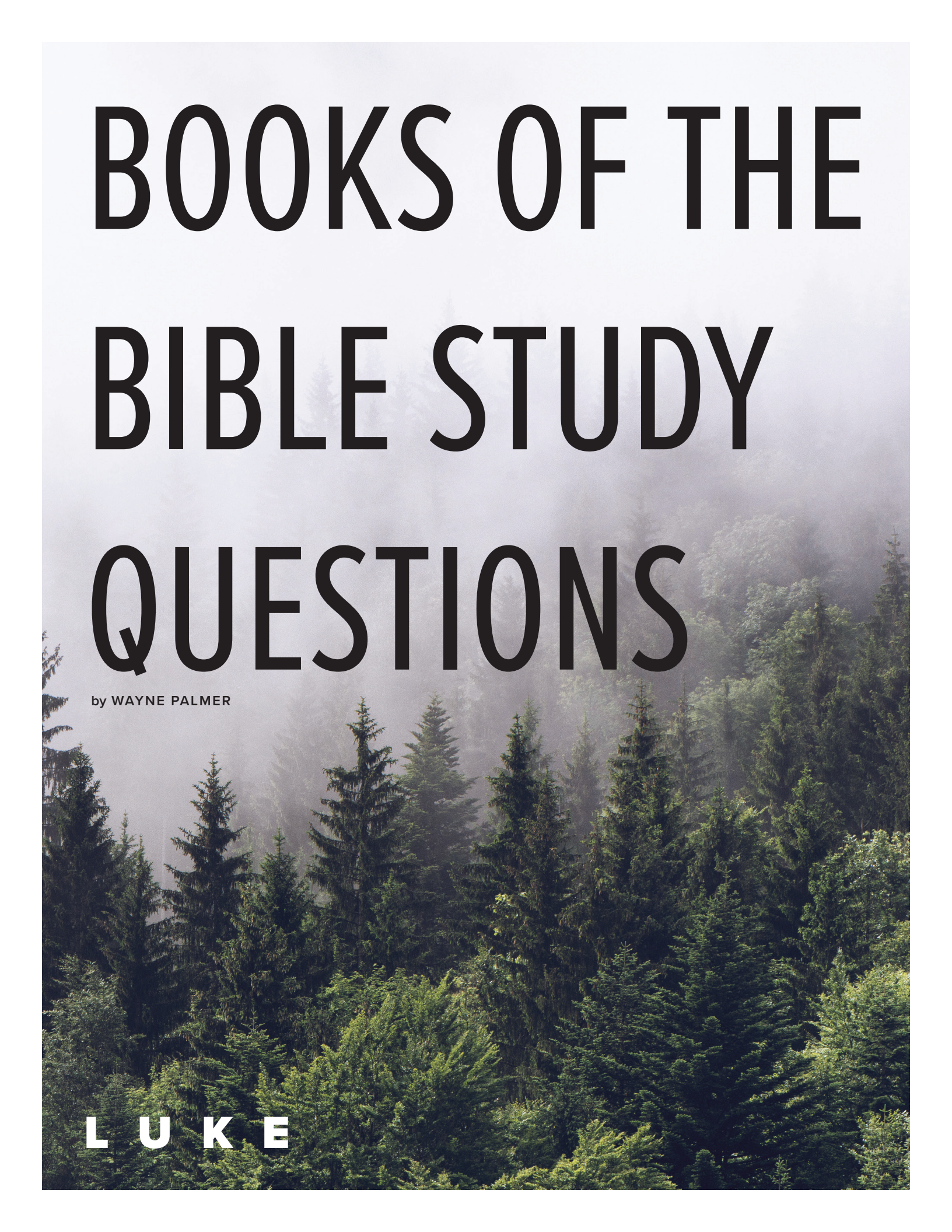
- Luke wants to provide Theophilus with a full narrative of Jesus' life. Since he started with Jesus leaving heaven to come down to earth, it was only fitting that he ends it with Jesus going up from earth to return to heaven.

Matthew ended his Gospel with the Great Commission.

Mark's Gospel has a controversial ending. If he intentionally left it unfinished, he may have been directing his readers to read Matthew to learn what happened after Jesus' resurrection. If he wrote the verses in most of our Bibles,

he includes a quick summary of Easter appearances and Jesus' ascension into heaven and His working through His Church from the right hand of God, the Father Almighty.

John closes his Gospel with an appeal to faith that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of God.



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