

Bible-Reading Coach Podcast Transcript

Week 43: Luke, *Jesus, the Healer*

Welcome to Week 43 of the Bible reading coach podcast. My name is Karl Vaters and I'm here to help you read through the entire Bible in 52 weeks.

So it's now week three of our read through the Gospels, which tells us about the life, the death and the resurrection of Jesus, the most important part of our faith by far. So far, we've talked about the difference between the Old and New Testaments, and how each gospel was written in a different way to tell a different aspect of the story of Jesus.

So before we get to the passage for today, let's take a look this week at when, why and how the gospels were written. So first of all, let's look at how, in a very simple way, it was written with a quill and ink on vellum, which is a sheepskin or on papyrus, which is the closest thing that they had to paper. We say that simply but there's no way we can have any comprehension of simply how difficult it was to create and write a single page. You couldn't just grab a pen and write it down or like today, we've got computers, I've got it in front of me here, right now, in order to have the pen you had to have the right type of fowl, the right type of bird that had the right type of feather, and pick that feather off and then shave the feather. And that is by far the simplest part of it.

Ink, where do you get ink, you don't just go to a store and buy ink, you have to create the ink by putting it together from different blends of berries or other different things that had these colors in them with the correct consistencies. Okay, and then they wouldn't last all that long. Because if you're creating ink out of natural things like berries, you know, they go bad after a while. So there's only a certain amount of time that you can use them. So you had to go through a whole process of that. And then the hardest part of all, the thing to write it on.

Imagine if you're writing on vellum, which is sheepskin, so you've got the sheep, you shear the sheep and finally, you get to the point where the sheep are too old to be sheared anymore. And so you kill them, so that you can eat the meat from them and you eat the meat from them. And then you have to, you have to trim off all of the skin, you have to get a large enough piece of it, that then can be dried and flattened and smoothed in a way that you could write on it. And that will maintain the ink. And that will hold for long enough for people to be able to pass it around and read it for years to come possibly.

Or papyrus which is made out of reeds, kind of like we make paper today. But you got to go through the whole process of growing the papyrus, of harvesting the papyrus, of going through whatever process that they went through, to crush it, and then to smooth it out to wet it to dry it to flatten it to make sure that the sheets are large enough.

Bottom line is only really really wealthy people or people who were in, in the church or in the synagogue or any other another institution of learning could put together the funds to be able to have, you know more than tiny little scraps upon which they could write, the average person would scratch something from, you know, grab a stick, grab a berry, and scratch something on a rock, I mean, or a piece of wood if you wanted it to be more portable, and you'd only get a word or two or a letter to on that. And that was all they did. So just the fact that we have these books from this era, and that they had been sustained over these years accurately is really from the providence of God that he's allowed this to happen because it was so so difficult.

So they wrote it this way, and then they would pass it around because it was so precious, they would pass it from person to person, nobody would just have to keep it and like have a book on a shelf. First of all, they weren't done in books, they were done on scrolls, or just simply flat sheets of paper. And then you'd pass them around to as many people as could get them to read them aloud. And then if someone else had the chance to be able to copy it on another piece of papyrus or vellum, they would do the same. So all of the Bible books that we have, were regularly passed around, regularly read to others and they're regularly copied and taken to other places. And the speed with which the message spread through these ancient ways of communication was really extraordinary.

We have in fact 1000s of early manuscripts of the Bible, hundreds of times more than we have of any manuscripts of any other ancient writings, so many of them by contrasting and comparing them from different dates and different times in different places. We have an absolute certainty of the accuracy of what we're reading simply from a scientific basis. Forget faith, we don't forget faith. But aside from faith, the scientific study of this shows how accurate they are even if you don't believe in the Bible and what it's saying. You cannot deny from the archaeological and scientific evidence that what we have is an accurate representation of what they wrote at the time. And that right there is such a beginning basis for why we have confidence in what we read in the Bible, because we know that what we have is at least accurate for what they wrote at the time. So that's the first thing about how it was written.

Second thing, when, as mentioned earlier, Mark was the first of the Gospels written, but we didn't actually mention when that was, and we didn't compare it to any of the other Bible books. So let's talk a little bit about that. The first thing to note is that the New Testament was not written in the order that the books appear in our Bibles except for revelation, which is the last one that appears in our Bible. And it was the last one written, the first books that were written were not the Gospels, which appear first in our New Testament, but they were the letters or what are sometimes called the epistles.

Because what happened was this, as the church started spreading and talking about Jesus, and then they would hear back from maybe a church that they had planted in a town and they'd hear, hey, they're not quite doing this thing, right correctly, the person who planted that church or some other person that they respected, would write and say, hey, you need to fix this, or they'd hear that they were under persecution, and they'd write something to encourage them, or they couldn't stay long enough to give the full teaching. And so they'd write later to finish up that teaching.

Bottom line is in the letters that we have, until we get to maybe Romans. And then when we get to the Gospels, and then when we get to Revelation, aside from those, nobody sat down and said, I'm going to write something that's going to go in the Bible, they didn't think they were writing the Bible, they were simply writing letters to other Christians to help them go along. And that feeling is in them. When we get to those, we'll talk about it when we get to that, because it's really, really cool to see the immediacy and the personality that comes through because they were just writing from friend to friend, sometimes angrily, sometimes happily, sometimes, sadly, all kinds of different ways that they were doing it.

So they weren't, again, trying to write the Bible, which I think to me actually goes to its to, to its reliability. When someone sits down to write scripture, because I want to start a religion, I

don't trust that. But when someone is simply writing because they want to be truthful with a friend, that's something I have a greater degree of trust in.

So anyway, from that, the first letters, the first parts of the investment that were written, were the letters. Probably the first three letters written were James, which was written by James, the half brother of Jesus. And first and second, Thessalonians, and Galatians, which were written by Paul, those four are almost always cited as the first four books written in the New Testament, different scholars will disagree on which one was written at what time but they were all probably written within about a four year span of time from 50 to 53. AD. So which one actually came dead-on first, and really doesn't matter. But those are the first four books written, maybe, or maybe not, in the order that I gave it to you doesn't really matter.

Mark was probably the next book written. So maybe the fifth book, maybe the sixth book of the Bible, written probably in the early to mid 50s. AD. So Mark was written fewer than 20 years after the events of Jesus took place. So if you're writing about an event that took place fewer than 20 years ago, that means that a lot of people were alive, who were at that event are still alive today. And you can go ask them and compare your notes to their notes, okay.

In fact, we know that this was written this early, because there are some fragments of early copies of the New Testament, the oldest one is a small fragment that's simply been called P 52. So you can actually look up, you can Google p 52, Papyrus, and you'll see this information for yourself. It's a fragment from the Gospel of John. And all experts date it from somewhere between 100 to 150AD. So this is a copy of a copy of a copy. It's not the original thing written by John, but we have a copy from 100 to 150AD of the Gospel of John. And we know that John was one of the last books of the Bible written not one of the first ones, which means one of the last books of the Bible written has a copy that we have in our hands today in England, okay. It exists today in a museum in England.

That was written potentially 70 years after Jesus died. And that's a copy of a copy. Okay, and it's one of the later ones which means books like Mark were written earlier than that, and books like First and Second Thessalonians were written even earlier than that. So that's why it's every once in a while, cynics and skeptics of the Bible we talked about those folks a lot, don't we? They'll come along as none of it was even written two or three or 400 ad. They are either lying or they don't know what they're talking about because p 52. Is carbon dated or however they do the dating is dated to 100 250 ad and it is A quote from the Gospel of John. And John was one of the latest ones written. So this idea that it was all written so much later that they just made it all up simply doesn't hold any water whatsoever.

So, in fact, this is how Luke actually starts his book. Luke starts his book by answering the how and the why questions of how and why the Gospels are written. So let's actually take a look. So if you want to know how the gospels were written, or why they were written, let's take a look at it. And even when, let's take a look at the first few verses of what we'll be reading this week, Luke chapters 1, verses 1 through 4 says this, "Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us, by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too, decided to write an orderly account for you most excellent the office."

So if the office is the person who's writing to, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught. So what he's saying in the first four words is really important to

break this down for you. Luke starts by saying that he's not the first one to write a gospel about Jesus. But many have attempted to do this. So we know Luke isn't the first because he says others have done this before me. Most of those attempts have been lost. We have four of them that we have any reliability on today, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. He then says that he did research by talking to people who, quote, "handed down" what had been fulfilled, and quote, "that these things had been fulfilled among us, not among other people."

And thirdly, he says it was from eyewitnesses. He interviewed people who saw these events occur. And he wrote it down at a time where he could say, these are things that happened among us, not among them way back in the day. But among us around today. "There are people around today that I interviewed who saw this stuff. And I did multiple interviews with multiple people who actually saw these events take place." And then he says, he investigated himself and he wrote it down in an orderly account. This is how a good journalist does their work. So this gives you an idea of when he wrote it, when the people who witnessed it were still alive, how he wrote it by interviewing them and doing a careful investigation, and then writing it out in an orderly way.

But why did he write it? Well, verse 4, he tells us why he wrote it, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught. So when he wrote it, when the people were still alive, who saw it, how he wrote it by doing the investigation and putting it in an orderly way, and why he wrote it, so that we can know for certain that these things that seemed crazy, actually took place. So keep this in mind, as you read the book of Luke, it's a really important way to begin this book. And because of the kind of old school way that those first four verses are written, we sometimes don't see what they mean. But that gives you a good understanding of it.

So when you read it for yourself, first thing this week, you'll see that as you read it, so keep that in mind as you read the book of Luke, this is a work of a researcher, who interviewed many eyewitnesses, so that we can be certain of these events that they took place as he wrote them down. So let's take a look at what he wrote. First begins with the announcement and the birth of Jesus and Luke Chapter 1 through 2 right after the first four verses, starting with verse 5 of chapter 1 all the way through verse 2.

We, first of all, meet John the Baptist again, but this time, we actually meet his parents. And we understand that not just Jesus's birth was miraculous, but that John the Baptist, birth was miraculous, and that John the Baptist was a close cousin of Jesus, that they're actually family members. So this is something that we hadn't seen before. Then we get to the Christmas story that is most often told every time a Christmas comes around. This is the version of the story with the shepherds with the angel choir and with the manger. So as you read that, that will be very familiar to you for those of us who are familiar with the Christmas story, which is pretty much all of us isn't it?

It's then followed by two episodes at the temple. One when Jesus was eight when he went to be circumcised, and two people who were waiting for the Messiah recognized, hey, this baby is Messiah. And then when he was 12, were they headed back home at all? Oh, Jesus is lost. We thought it was with others in the caravan. And he's there in the temple, listening to and speaking and asking wise questions of the elders, and says, "I've got to be about my Father's business". That is, I'm in my Father's House, the Temple.

And there they are the only two episodes in the Bible about young Jesus other than the birth story about Jesus as a young child. Matthew would be the other one where it talks about

the Wiseman visiting probably when he was about two. Luke adds that eight day old one and as the 12 year old one. So the only picture we have of Jesus as an adolescent is what we'll be reading first this week in the beginning of Luke.

All right, we then go to Luke chapter three, where we come to John the Baptist again, this time, John the Baptist ministry, and as followed by Jesus genealogy, like we saw already in Matthew, but this time, the genealogy of Jesus has given working its way backwards, starting with Jesus and going all the way back to Adam's creation by God, Himself. Immediately after that, we go to Luke four and the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, it is a fascinating story with so much to talk about. But for now, just a couple of things to note, as you read it yourself this week.

First of all, notice that the temptations are to three very different aspects of our lives that are important to us. He appeals to his hunger, he appeals to power, and he appeals to pride. Take a look at that as you read the temptations of Jesus. And notice how Jesus answers all of them. He answers every single temptation by quoting scripture. Specifically, he quotes out of Deuteronomy for all three of them. But Jesus knew scripture well enough. And it was so much a part of who he was that he knew that the strength of scripture would be what sustained him against temptation. And it's the same for us. This is why we're reading the Bible together, so that we have the same scripture in us that we can draw on that Jesus had during his time of greatest temptation.

We then move in chapters 4 through the beginning of 9 with the Galilee ministry, which we've talked about a couple of times already, the region that he goes through near his hometown. And then at the end of nine, we're going to read about the region near Galilee, where he goes up to the north a little bit and over the river in the northern section outside of Israel's borders. Then he goes down to Judea and Luke nine through 13, where he spends time around Jerusalem, as the heat kind of builds on his ministry and his enemies continue to get angrier, as we've seen in both of the previous two gospels.

Then we have a slight departure in Luke, Luke the end of 13th, to the beginning of 19, a fairly long section where it talks about his ministry in Perea. Both Matthew and Mark when they talk about the journey to Judea, I didn't mention it much before because it comes up so much here. They also mentioned his journeys into Perea, which was the area across the Jordan in the south, where he's already been across the Jordan in the north. But he also journeyed a little bit across the Jordan River, in the southern kingdom. In Matthew and Mark, it's barely mentioned, and it's mentioned, kind of interacting with his time in Judea. But Luke spends more time there than the other new to to do combined.

And when he's there, we see a ton of stories, like lepers being healed his conversation with the rich young man who would not give up his treasures on earth for treasures in heaven, a blind man that Jesus heals so that he sees Zacchaeus, who climbs up into the tree, all of that happens during that trip. And we see a whole lot of parables of Jesus, the three last parables in Luke 15, the last coin, the last Lamb and the last son, are there the parable of the persistent widow, the parable of the Pharisee, and the tax tax collector, all of that happens during his Perean Ministry.

But also notice from chapter 18:31, on, take a look at what he says here, because from 18:31 on things have a shift. In Luke 18:31, this is what happens. Jesus says, we are going up to Jerusalem, he's talking, he's talking to his disciples, and He says, we are going up to

Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. And then he goes on to say what's going to happen, I'm going to be turned over, I'm going to be crucified. And at that point on, his eyes are set to Jerusalem.

And from that point on, I want you to imagine in your mind, a straight line from where he is to Jerusalem. And he walks as straight as he can make it according to the highways of their day. When he goes through Jericho, for instance, where he meets Zacchaeus on his way to Jericho is where he meets Zacchaeus. When he goes to Jericho, Jericho is really close to Jerusalem. He is on his way. He said his sights on Jerusalem, the final week is about to happen.

And then of course we get there, and Luke chapter nine at the end of 19. And all the way through chapter 24. We have once again the triumphant entry on Palm Sunday, he turns over the tables in the temple. He talks about His Second Coming in chapter 21. One more time, we have the Last Supper, the betrayal of Jesus, the trial, the cross, and the resurrection of Jesus. And what's interesting in this part about Luke is when we get to chapter 24, Luke has one of the longer post resurrection accounts.

There's not a lot said in the other Gospels about what happened after his resurrection. Luke does a lot more. And when we get to John, we'll see quite a bit that happens after his resurrection as well. And you're also going to note this, Luke is the only one to mention Jesus' ascension in any detail whatsoever. Matthew doesn't mention it at all. John won't mention it at all. Mark gives only one little verse at the end of the book. But Luke and Acts both spend some time on Jesus ascending into heaven. And Luke and Acts were both written by the same author. So Luke, the doctor, the educated one, the one who did the research is the only one who spends any time on Jesus ascending into heaven, which is really fascinating to me.

Because, as we conclude, Luke is a favorite book of people who like science, who like medicine, and like building logical arguments, because that's what Luke does here. But when we talk about miracles, like the ascension, the resurrection, you know, blind eyes being opened, people, we have this idea that people who like research and like science, well, they just look at that and go, now it's a bunch of nonsense, right? But the person in the Bible who was the most educated and we know Luke was really well educated, because those who read Greek, I don't, but those who read the Greek language tell us that the Greek language that's used in the Gospel of Luke is a much more highly educated form of the language than in the other three gospels. So Luke was a very, very highly educated man.

Paul as well, when he writes his epistles, his letters, he uses a very high educated form of Greek. It's like today, you can read, you know, basic English, or you can read somebody who really knows how to use the language and it's really elevated. Well, same thing. Same thing with Greek. That's how we know Luke was well educated. Plus, he tells us at the beginning, so here he is, he's a scientist. He's a logical person. He's highly educated, he's writing to other highly educated people. He's done his research, but he doesn't shy away from miracles.

So why wouldn't a person of, you know academic rigor, shy away from miracles? Well, because he did the research. He actually spends more time on miracles than the others do, because he did the research. And he discovered it actually happened. He actually did heal those people, he actually did rise from the dead, he actually did ascend into heaven, I talked to a lot of people who were there and who saw it, and I believe them because their testimony is reliable. You know, again, we have the opposite way. We usually think, if you're logical, you can't believe in miracles.

Thomas Jefferson, for instance, had put together what is today called the Jefferson Bible. And what he did was he bought two copies of the Bible, because it's printed on both sides. And he cut out of the New Testament, any miracles, and only has the logical scientific teaching and events of Jesus' life that weren't miraculous. And it's called the Jefferson Bible, you can Google it and see for yourself that that's how we put it together. Why? because Jefferson, a man of learning, couldn't believe in the miracles.

But Luke, one of the smartest men of the New Testament, though the guy who researched it the most and talked to the most eyewitnesses, when I don't know what to tell you. They happen, and I'm putting it in my book. It's really extraordinary. So he did the research. So I encourage you, read it for yourself. See the results of his research, the results of a man of science, who, who heard these crazy stories, who decided to do the work to do the research, who interviewed eyewitnesses, and he walked away going, wow, this really happened. It's an extraordinary thing to read. I hope you'll get that out of it, and even more as you read it through this week, and we'll see you next week.

If you'd like to support this ministry, and help put resources like this into the hands of the people who need them the most, go to KarlVaters.com/support. For an outline of the entire Bible Reading plan, go to KarlVaters.com/bibleoutline. And if you'd like a transcript of this episode, it's available at KarlVaters.com/transcripts. If you're a church leader, and you'd like to get a transcript of each episode a week in advance, subscribe to our free newsletter at KarlVaters.com/subscribe. All these links are in the show notes. This episode was produced by Veronica Beaver. The theme music was written and performed by Jack Wilkins of JackWilkinsmusic.com. And me? I'm Karl Vaters and I'm your Bible Reading Coach.