The Author & Background Information:

1. Luke is the writer of both the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. He accompanied Paul on many of his missionary journeys. He was a doctor, appears to be highly educated and literate and was likely a gentile Greek who converted to Christianity.

   Colossians 4:14 -- *"Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas."*
   Philemon 1:24 – *"…and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers."*
   2 Timothy 4:11 – *"Luke alone is with me…"* *Written possibly near the end of Paul's life.*

2. Luke most likely wrote his gospel sometime around AD 55. Read Luke 1:1-4 & Acts 1:1. The Gospel is written to someone named Theophilus, who was possibly a wealthy patron who helped Luke produce and publish his Gospel and the Book of Acts. But note the name Theophilus means: _____(Friend of God). What might this imply about the true intended recipients of the gospel? Name stands for any friend of Jesus (any Christian) reading this Gospel, so he or she might "have certainty concerning the things you have been taught" (Luke 1:4).

4. Consider also the reason Luke is writing to Theophilus. His purpose is to _____ (teach). This makes the third Gospel the most outspokenly "teaching" Gospel of them all. Luke knew that there had been many preachers and teachers that had visited the cities and congregations to which the Christian faith has spread around the Roman Empire. Paul's writings predate all the Gospels, and while his letters are crammed with doctrine and teaching of the Christian faith, there was probably still, undoubtedly, a somewhat confused picture of the person, work and teachings of Jesus amongst the early Christians. Luke determines to conduct careful research, to sort out the evidence and to place the events of Jesus' life in an accurate, ordered account, in addition to recording how the Apostles then take the faith to the world -- we should note at the outset that the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles were originally one volume and they only become separated in the New Testament due to John being the final Gospel.

   Luke had access to eye-witnesses of the original events in Jesus' life. He was probably with Paul during his two year stay in Judah. He surely interviewed Mary, the mother of Jesus given the incredible detail about her mother's cousin Elizabeth and John (who became the Baptizer), Jesus' cousin. There are details about Jesus' birth and boyhood that only someone with first-hand knowledge would be able to share.

- Luke uses 60% of the Gospel of Mark
- Luke parallels Matthew's Gospel, especially a great deal of Jesus' teaching including the Sermon on the Mount and many parables.
- Luke stands alone in nearly half of what he writes, especially the opening chapters and the great middle of Luke's Gospel (Luke 9:51-19:28).

❹ How does Luke 1:1-4 show that early Christians practiced their faith in ways similar to how we do today, like Bible study, Sunday school, Christian education, and faith formation?

Luke 1:1-4 provides textual evidence suggesting that early Christians engaged in practices similar to modern church activities:

1. The effort to "compile a narrative" shows an active pursuit of documenting faith experiences, akin to Bible study today.
2. The reliance on "eyewitnesses" indicates an emphasis on teaching that is rooted in firsthand experiences, similar to modern practices that value scriptural authenticity.
3. Luke's intention to provide "an orderly account" reflects a structured approach to education about the faith, paralleling current systematic teaching methods.
4. The goal of providing "certainty concerning the things you have been taught" mirrors the contemporary emphasis on ensuring believers have a clear understanding of their faith.

❺ **The Major Themes of Luke's Gospel: Why title this study *"An Upside-Down Kingdom"*?**

✞ **Fulfillment of the Old Testament Prophetic Tradition:** Like the prophets of the Old Testament, Jesus' ministry follows the same pattern – miracles & teaching, then rejection.

✞ **Values:** Luke shows us that where the world values power, status, wealth, prestige and position, Jesus values the weak, lowly, poor, humble, hungry and outsider. Luke's gospel particularly speaks about the dangers of money and how followers of Jesus must view and use money differently from the world – they're called to generosity and caring for others. Consider the difference in the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3 and Luke 6:20.

✞ **The people** – Luke is likely the only gentile writer in the New Testament and his Gospel has a particular focus on salvation for outsider. Those who are embraced by the kingdom are a barren woman, a poor peasant girl, shepherds, tax-collectors, gentiles, those with leprosy, prostitutes, children, blind people, widows and so on. See examples below. Who are the ones that are left out of the kingdom? The rich young ruler, the Pharisee(s), the rich man at whose gate Lazarus sat, Pilate, Caesar and the Chief Priest.

1. Elizabeth & Mary - In the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55), Mary praises God for looking upon her lowly state and lifting her up. She speaks of God's concern for the humble and His action to bring down the powerful while uplifting the meek.

2. The Shepherds (Luke 2:8-20) - The announcement of Jesus' birth was made to these lowly shepherds, who were often marginalized in society. Their inclusion highlights how Jesus comes to those who are considered the least.

3. The Poor Widow (Luke 21:1-4) - In this passage, Jesus observes a poor widow who gives two small coins to the temple treasury. He notes that she has given more than the rich because she gave all she had, illustrating true generosity.

4. Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) - As a wealthy tax collector, Zacchaeus represents social outsider status. His encounter with Jesus leads to repentance and a commitment to give half of his possessions to the poor and repay those he has cheated fourfold.

5. The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) - In this parable, the Samaritan, an outsider and despised by Jews, cares for a beaten man, demonstrating that true neighborliness transcends social status and ethnic boundaries.

6. Poor Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) - In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Lazarus is a poor man who suffers and longs for scraps from the rich man's table. After death, their fortunes are reversed, serving as a stark warning about the consequences of failing to care for the needy.

7. The Blind Beggar (Luke 18:35-43) - This story features a blind beggar who acknowledges Jesus as the Son of David and pleads for healing. His faith and desperation reflect the theme of reliance on Jesus for mercy and restoration.

✞ **The King –** And then there is the King Himself; He is homeless, rejected by His own people, an outcast, humiliated and finally crucified by the powerful elite. And yet even when He is raised and ascended to the right hand of the father Luke tells us that the heavenly banquet is a place where the Master will have His people "recline at the table and will come and wait on them" (Luke 12:37). The king becomes a servant!

❻ How does Luke's reasons for writing this Gospel challenge the idea that believing in Christianity is just a random jump into believing something without reason? See also Paul's words to Timothy in Timothy 3:14-17.

A part of conversion is persuasion. At least, Luke thinks it is. While there are many today who view Christian faith as a leap into the dark, without adequate reasons to believe it is true, Luke does not leave it to chance. He undertakes a significant intellectual endeavor by writing a lengthy account to certify the Christian teachings about Christ that were handed down to him. In Acts 17:11, He also commends the Bereans for their diligent examination of the Scriptures. in Acts 17:11, indicating that he values a faith grounded in inquiry and evidence. Furthermore, in Acts 1:3, Luke highlights the robust evidence provided by Jesus during the forty days after the resurrection, suggesting that faith, for Luke, should not be blind but informed by compelling proof. This belief in the importance of persuasion underlines that faith is about a personal acceptance of what one has reason to believe is true.

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