

THE GOSPEL OF —
LUKE



INTRODUCTION

The Gospel of Luke is the third book in the New Testament after Matthew and Mark. This book offers a unique take on the life of Jesus and stands out for the following reasons:

- The writer is identified as Doctor Luke who was a Gentile physician, a historian, and a theologian
- He was not among the twelve apostles but a close companion of the Twelve and a coworker with Paul
- He is mentioned in the Paul's letters (Colossians 4:14, Philemon 1:24, 2 Timothy 4:11)

Luke's attention to detail not only makes his gospel the longest of the four gospels, but also the longest book in the New Testament. The Gospel of Luke begins its narrative earlier than the other gospels, commencing with the announcement of John the Baptist's birth. Moreover, it extends further until Jesus' ascension to heaven. Only Luke reveals anything about Jesus' childhood, describing His family's visit to Jerusalem when he was 12 years old (Luke 2:41–52).

More significantly, Luke is the only gospel writer to provide a sequel - the Book of Acts. Luke continues his story beyond the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus to the commencement and growth of the early church. The Luke - Acts volume contributes one-fourth of the New Testament.

The prologue of the gospel reveals Luke's intention and purpose for writing this gospel. Luke is meticulous in carefully recording the facts in order to confirm the truth of the Christian message - the continuity of God's promises given to Israel and their fulfilment in Jesus the Messiah and the Church.



*"Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, ²just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were **eyewitnesses and servants of the word.** ³With 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 Theophilus, ⁴so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught."*

Luke-Acts as One

When Luke wrote his Gospel, he already had Acts in mind. And the story he begins in the Gospel continues through to the end of Acts. Scholars commonly refer to this two-volume work as "Luke-Acts."

Evidence for this unity can be found in the earliest chapters of the Gospel. In Luke 2:32, the old prophet Simeon predicts that Jesus will not only bring glory to Israel, but will also be *"a light for revelation to the Gentiles."* This is a reference to Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6, where the Servant-Messiah is predicted to be the one to restore Israel and to bring salvation to the Gentiles.

Although this prophecy is made at the beginning of Luke's Gospel, it does not come to fulfilment until Acts, when large numbers of Gentiles come to faith. In Acts 13:46, the apostle Paul cites this same passage, Isaiah 49:6, to explain why he is turning to the Gentiles: *"For this is what the Lord has commanded us: 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'"*

THE BIG IDEAS IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

■ Jesus Christ is the Promised Messiah for the Jews and the Saviour of the Whole World

Luke writes to confirm that Christianity is not a new religion. It is rather the fulfilment of God's promises given to Israel in the Old Testament. Jesus is certainly the Jewish Messiah, but He is also the Savior of the whole world. His death, resurrection, and ascension brought forgiveness of sins, not only to Israel but to all people who respond to Him in faith. The church, made up of both Jews and Gentiles, represents the true people of God in this new-age of salvation. Luke portrays Jesus as the hope of the world. But he is not a universalist. He does not assert that everyone will be saved. He says everyone can be saved—old, young, slave, free, rich, poor, Jew, Samaritan. Whatever and whoever you are, Jesus died for you.

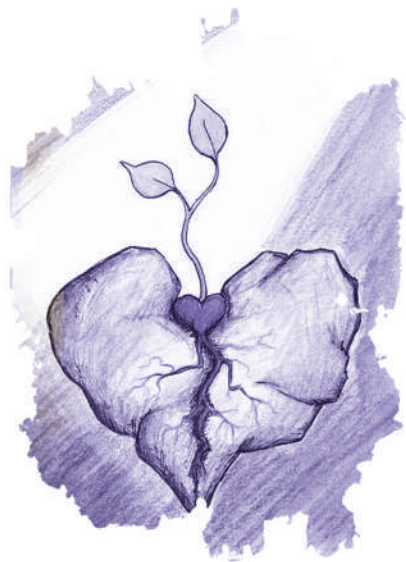
■ God's Love for the 'Lost'

The Parable of the Lost Sheep, Lost Coin and Lost Son and many others in the Gospel of Luke demonstrate God's love for sinners, His desire for them to be restored, and the free forgiveness available to those who come to Him in repentance and faith. The climax of these parables is in the Zacchaeus episode (Luke 19:1–11), where a chief tax collector responds to Jesus' call. Jesus states, *"Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost"* (Luke 19:10–11).

In English, the word 'lost' has multiple meanings. A lost object is overlooked, no longer possessed or known or appreciated. Lost can also mean helpless or unable to find the way but Luke's meaning of 'lost' is "destroyed" or "perished" because His people who are made in His image are separated from God. **Jesus came to restore them back into a relationship with Him.**

■ An Unexpected Kingdom of God

Luke documents how Jesus ushers in God's Kingdom on Earth by creating a new Israel that includes the poor, outcasts, and marginalized – a place where all are welcomed and power structures are reversed. It's a place where the poor, humble and outcasts are elevated to places of honour. Jesus begins His mission with this announcement from **Isaiah 61:1** *"The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the **poor**. He has sent me to bind up the **broken-hearted**, to proclaim freedom for the **captives** and release from **darkness** for the **prisoners**."*



Luke emphasizes this theme throughout his book by a series of parables about banquets, where Jesus illustrates that all are

welcome in the family of God. Jesus reverses the world order and elevates the humble. He offers them a place of belonging in God's eternal Kingdom through His suffering and death on the Cross.

■ **Luke Emphasizes the Activity of the Holy Spirit**

Luke portrays Jesus as a man of the Spirit, a charismatic leader who is born, anointed, led, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Also, all the followers of Jesus are given the gift of the Holy Spirit to accomplish a Kingdom mission.



The key turning points in Luke's two-volume story are initiated by the Spirit, particularly Jesus' birth (Luke 1:35), baptism (Luke 3:21-22), temptation (Luke 4:1-2), and the start of His ministry of teaching and healing (Luke 4:18). The beginning of Acts (Acts 2:4) and the mission to the Gentiles (Acts 10:44-48) are also marked by Spirit-led experiences.

The Pentecost story, the high point of what Luke says about the Spirit, is the fulfilment of the promise of “*the Father*” for the followers of Jesus (Luke 24:49). Until this point, apart from Jesus (see Luke 3:22, Luke 4:1), very few people were filled with the Spirit. However, Luke emphasizes that the Spirit appeared to all the disciples (Acts 2:1-4) and that the story was a model for later Christians (Acts 2:38). Thus, for Luke, while the resurrection was the key event in the life of Jesus, the presence and experience of the Spirit was fundamental for the new people of God.



CHAPTER SUMMARY

The Birth and Mission of Jesus

Luke 1 – 9:50

Luke 4:18-19

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”

A long journey to Jerusalem

Luke 9:51 – 19:27

Luke 19:10,

“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

Final Weeks in Jerusalem

Luke 19:28 – 24

Luke 24:46-47

He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning

LUKE 1 - 9:50

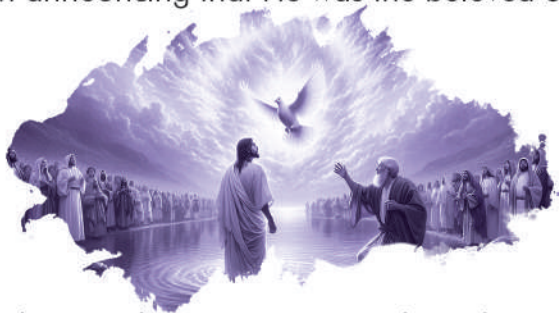
THE BIRTH AND MISSION OF JESUS

Chapters 1 and 2 begin with the narratives of an elderly priestly couple, Zechariah and Elizabeth, alongside a young unmarried woman, Mary, both blessed with divine promises of bearing sons. Both promises were fulfilled as John and Jesus were born. John was going to be the prophetic messenger promised in the Torah and declared by Prophets, to prepare Israel to meet their God. Jesus is the messianic King promised to David, who would bring God's reign over Israel and His blessing to all the nations, just as was promised to Abraham.

Luke intentionally starts his narrative by depicting an elderly couple and their angelic encounter in the temple. This deliberate choice prompts us to recall the tales of Genesis, particularly those of Abraham and Sarah, as well as Jacob's encounter with an angel. When God's mercy shows up, "*the nobodys*" get exalted to a place of honour. That's how God worked throughout the narrative of Israel. Luke lays the groundwork to illustrate God's historical *modus operandi*, showcasing how Jesus' arrival brought a radical reversal of societal values and status. It emphasizes Jesus' upliftment of the marginalized, particularly the poor.

Later in the book, Mary brought Jesus to the Jerusalem temple for His dedication, where two elderly prophets, Anna and Simeon, saw Jesus and recognized Him. Simeon sang a poem of his own that was inspired by the prophet Isaiah - this child is

“God’s salvation for Israel, and He will become a light to the nations”. With all of this anticipation, the story progresses into the main section in chapters 3-9, where Luke presents Jesus and His mission. John the Baptist was preparing for the arrival of the Kingdom of God. Jesus appeared as the leader of this new Israel. He was marked by the Spirit and the voice of God from heaven announcing that He was the beloved Son of God.



After this, Luke introduces Jesus’ genealogy that traces Jesus’ origins all the way back to David, then to Abraham, and finally back to Adam from Genesis. Luke was trying to show that Jesus is the messianic King of Israel, who would bring God’s blessing not only to Israel, the family of Abraham, but to all the descendants of Adam—the human race in its entirety. *(Please note that Matthew’s genealogy is only to show that Jesus is the Messianic King coming from the line of David and it ends in Abraham to show Jesus’ Jewish lineage but Luke extrapolates it all the way to Adam to show that Jesus is the King of all humanity).*

Luke immediately goes into a large block of stories showing what Jesus’ *“good news for the poor”* looks like in reality (chapters 4-8).

Who is Poor?

Jesus' mission to the poor had a broader expanse than those who were financially poor. According to Luke, it included people of low social status, people with disabilities, women, children, or the elderly. It also included social outsiders, like people of other ethnic groups or those whose poor life choices have placed them outside acceptable religious circles.

Luke's definition of poor did not refer only to the above-mentioned categories but included those who depend on God and trust in Him alone for their sustenance.

In the two versions of the Beatitudes of Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 6 and Matthew 5), the poor are the people who recognize their own spiritual poverty and the need for God's Kingdom, which Jesus graciously offers through faith in Him alone. According to Luke, the poor are better off than the rich and well-to-do, because they live under the promise of the kingdom.

Interestingly, among Jesus' followers

His Primary Mission in Galilee

We watch Jesus heal a bedridden sick woman (Luke 4:38-39), people with skin disease (Luke 5:12-16), and those who are paralyzed (Luke 5:17-2). There are also stories about Jesus welcoming into His community a tax-collector, Levi (Luke 5:27-32), who's not financially poor but is a social outsider. There is also a story about Jesus forgiving a prostitute (Luke 7:36-50). Luke is showing how Jesus' Kingdom brought restoration and the reversal of people's entire life circumstances. By doing so, Jesus expands the circle of people who are invited to discover the healing power of God's Kingdom.

As His mission attracts a large following, Jesus does something provocative by

were wealthy tax collectors and affluent individuals who, recognizing the poverty of their souls, sought to embrace a new way of life centered on trusting Jesus alone.

Martin Luther says, *"All human beings are beggars before God."* Whether poor materially or spiritually, we all need the *'bread from heaven.'* This Kingdom of God is open for all people, regardless of your sin, social status, sex, race, or nation.

forming them into a new Israel, appointing the twelve disciples as leaders, a clear symbol of Israel's original twelve tribes (Luke 6:12-16).

This section culminates in a new revelation of Jesus' mission to His disciples (Luke 9:18-36). Jesus says that He is the messianic King and will assert His reign over Israel by dying in Jerusalem and becoming the **suffering servant king of Isaiah 53** who dies for the sins of Israel.

Though Luke does not quote the Old Testament to the same extent that Matthew does, his narrative is full of Old Testament images and motifs. His purpose is to show that this is not the beginning of a new religion but rather a fulfilment of the old scriptures and renewal into a new way of life by following Jesus.



LUKE 9:51 – 19:27

A LONG JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

This mid-section in Luke's Gospel consisting of 10 chapters is one of the lengthy journeys to Jerusalem. In general, Luke follows Mark's outline for Jesus' public ministry. We learn that Jesus was heading towards Jerusalem in Mark 10:32, and He arrives half a chapter later, in Mark 11:1–11. In Luke, by contrast, Jesus heads toward Jerusalem in Luke 9:51, but does not arrive for the following ten chapters! (Luke 19:28) Jesus does not head straight for Jerusalem, but instead moves around from place to place especially outside Galilee. Yet, Luke repeatedly reminds the reader that Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51–56, 13:22, 13:33, 17:11, 18:31, 19:11, 19:28, 19:41). In short, though not a straight-line trip, the journey represents a theological theme (His love for the lost) and emphasizes Jesus' resolve to reach His Jerusalem goal (to die for the sins of the whole world).

These ten chapters of the Travel Narrative contain many of Jesus' most famous parables, such as the Good Samaritan, the Rich Fool, the Great Banquet, the Prodigal Son, the Rich Man and Lazarus, the Persistent Widow and Pharisee and Tax Collector. They also contain many memorable stories, including the meal at the home of Mary and Martha, the healing of ten men with leprosy, and the story of Zacchaeus. This section has sometimes been called "*The Gospel for the Outcast*," since so many of the stories and parables relate to God's love for the lost and the outsider.

What are Parables?

Parables are commonly described as “earthly stories with heavenly meanings.” Such stories are told not only for the sake of storytelling in the Jewish culture but also intend to persuade people to enter the kingdom of God. Parables therefore are not universal human stories. One will find Old Testament prophets using many parables to persuade people to turn from their wicked ways.

Jesus spoke in parables not to confuse people but to illuminate and clarify the story of God’s covenant with Israel. It is a story of God’s compassion for the wayward people of Israel – a people who won’t listen or obey. Jesus expected at least His disciples to understand the Parables.

The parables are part of the very means through which Jesus brings God’s kingdom. **They demand that hearers confess their sin, discard their idols, and pledge allegiance to the true King standing before them.**

Those with functioning eyes and ears will do so. Can you see why He expected His disciples to understand the parables? Failure to understand these stories about God’s kingdom is equivalent to a failure to participate in the kingdom.

The midpoint of the Travel Narrative is chapter 15, where we read about the parables of “*lost things*” (Lost Sheep; Lost Coin; Lost Son). **These stories demonstrate God’s love for sinners, His desire for them to be restored, and the free forgiveness available to those who come to Him in repentance and faith.** The climax of the Travel Narrative is the Zacchaeus episode (Luke 19:1-11), where a chief tax collector responds to Jesus’ call. Tax collectors were considered as traitors because of their collusion with the Roman rulers and their reputation for extortion. A chief tax collector who oversaw other tax collectors would be viewed as the worst of the worst. Yet, when Zacchaeus responded to Jesus’ call, He said, “*Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too,*

is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” (Luke 19:10-11)

This statement epitomizes Luke’s central theme. With the coming of Jesus the Messiah, God’s end-time salvation has arrived. It is made available to all who respond in faith, whatever may be their past life, social status, or ethnicity.

However, not everyone is happy about this. **There are heated debates with Israel’s leaders, in which Jesus confronts their pride and hypocrisy.** Through the parable of the Prodigal Son and the Elder brother (Luke 15), Jesus explains His mission to the leaders of Israel. His Kingdom represents God’s joyous welcome to every kind of person into His family. The only entry requirement is humility and repentance like the prodigal son. The elder son represents Israel’s leaders who are upset with the Father’s choice to celebrate the return of the prodigal son and refrain from all celebrations.

Parables found only in Luke’s Gospel

There are close to 60 parables of Lord Jesus mentioned in all the four gospels. 16 parables that are found only in gospel of Luke and not in any other gospel records.

1. Two Debtors (7:41-42)
2. Good Samaritan (10:30-35)
3. Friend at Midnight (11:5-8)
4. Rich Fool (12:16-21)
5. Barren Fig Tree (13:6-9)
6. Master Shuts Door (13:24-27)
7. Tower Builder (14:28-30)
8. Battling King (14:31-33)
9. Lost Coin (15:8-10)
10. Prodigal and Older son (15:11-32)
11. Dishonest manager (16:1-8)
12. Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19-31)
13. Unworthy servants (17:7-10)
14. Unjust Judge (18:2-5)
15. Pharisee & Tax collector (18:10-14)
16. Minas (19:12-27)

LUKE 19:28 – 24

FINAL WEEKS IN JERUSALEM

Passover and Crucifixion

Jesus finally arrived in Jerusalem for the Passover (Luke 19:28-44). He wept as He approached the city. Jesus cried for the rejection of God's prophets in the past and even the Messiah (13:34). His disciples hailed Him as the messianic King, but the religious leaders denounced Him. **He came to His own but they rejected Him. Jesus knew that their rejection of His Kingdom of peace would set Israel on a road of resistance and rebellion against the Roman empire, which would eventually bring about the city's downfall.** It's this looming destruction that Jesus symbolically enacted when He stormed into the temple and ejected the animal sellers, bringing a halt to the sacrificial system. He said that the place of worship had turned into a "den of rebels" (Luke 19:46, "saying to them, *"It is written, 'And My house shall be a house of prayer,' but you have made it a robbers' den."*), and it would be destroyed. This action sparked numerous debates between Jesus and Israel's elders, ultimately leading to Jesus' prophecy that Roman armies would encircle the city, resulting in its destruction along with the temple, within a single generation.

Jesus retreated with His disciples to celebrate the Passover meal, the annual symbolic meal that retold Israel's liberation from slavery through the death of a lamb.

Jesus transformed the meal's bread and wine into new symbols of a new exodus. His broken body and shed blood would bring liberation for Jesus' renewed Israel.



After the meal, Jesus was arrested and examined before the Jewish leaders. He was soon put on trial as a person claiming to be king, and here Luke emphasizes Jesus' innocence. Pilate, the Roman governor, claimed that Jesus was innocent three times before giving in. Even Herod, the ruler of Galilee, found nothing to accuse Jesus. (At the crucifixion also, a Roman centurion proclaimed the innocence of Jesus – Luke 23:47 (ESV)).

Despite His innocence, the persistence of the religious leaders compelled Pilate to crucify Jesus. Even during His painful death, Jesus embodied the love and mercy of God, which He proclaimed fervently. He offered God's forgiveness to the soldiers as they crucified Him (*"Father, forgive them,"* Luke 23:34). Later, one of the criminals being executed alongside Jesus realized who He truly was, saying, *"Remember me when you come into your Kingdom"* (Luke 23:42). Jesus' final words were an offer of hope to this humiliated criminal - *"Today you will be with me in paradise"* (Luke 23:43). With this last act of generosity and kindness, Jesus died.

Resurrection

Jesus' body was placed and sealed inside a tomb. On the first day of the week, some of Jesus' disciples came to the tomb and found it empty. Two angelic figures were there to inform them that Jesus had risen from the dead. The disciples left in a state of amazement.

At that moment, Luke narrates one of the most beautiful stories (Luke 24:13-32). Two of Jesus' disciples were leaving Jerusalem for a town called Emmaus, heartbroken over His death. Suddenly, Jesus joined them and walked alongside, but they didn't recognize Him. He asked why they were sad, and they went on to tell Him how they had hoped Jesus was the one to redeem Israel. They had hoped that He would be

Lessons from the Road to Emmaus

Luke 24:13-32

Lesson 1: When we think God has failed us, it is common to feel frustrated and confused—usually because we do not know the whole story but know that Jesus will always walk with us in our uncertainties and disappointments.

Lesson 2: Jesus is never going to force Himself on us. He's not going to push His way through, bully us or strong-arm us into believing. That is true love. He comes into our home and hearts only by invitation, then He opens our eyes to see the larger story of what God is doing.

Lesson 3: Prayer by faith is your door to experience God's manifest presence. "Abide with us" was the request of the two disciples to Jesus, not knowing it was Him. But at the table, He revealed himself.

Lesson 4: The Scriptures (Holy Bible) were to serve as the foundation for their faith and their ministry ahead. Jesus taught them to search the Scriptures for hope and we ought to do the same. Jesus "opened their minds to understand

more—the Messiah, Israel’s Redeemer. Sadly, His crucifixion had dashed their hopes. Jesus responded by correcting their misconceptions,

“How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.” (Luke 24:25-27)

the Scriptures” (Luke 24:25-26, 45-46).

Lesson 5: An encounter with Jesus will never leave you the same. Two disciples who were sad and confused at first were transformed into powerful witnesses for the Lord. He filled them with joy and confidence. It was a glorious transformation for the mission ahead!

Later, as they were having a meal, Jesus broke the bread for them as He had at the Passover meal. It was at that moment they finally recognized Him!

Luke tells this story to make a powerful point about following Jesus. **When a person imposes their agenda and view of reality on Jesus, He remains invisible and unknown to them. We will only see and know the real Jesus when we submit ourselves to His Upside-Down Kingdom or the New way of Life,** epitomized in His broken body on the cross that was offered in selfless love.

The concluding scene in the Book of Luke is set around yet another meal. Jesus appeared before His disciples and

explained to them, using the Old Testament Scriptures, that these events were all part of God's plan. The Messiah would become Israel's King by suffering and dying for their sins and conquering their evil with His resurrected life. Just as Simeon the prophet promised all the way back in Luke 2, Jesus' Kingdom was always meant to move outward. So, Jesus told the disciples that God's forgiveness must now be announced to all the nations by inviting people to follow him.

But for the moment, Jesus told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the Spirit, who would empower them for this new mission. And that is Luke's second volume, the book of Acts – God's plan of salvation that is moving outward to include all humanity – Jews and Gentiles. The disciples' mission in the power of the Holy Spirit was to take this message of salvation to the ends of the earth.

Ascension

Jesus' ascension to heaven is briefly mentioned at the end of this Gospel (Luke 24:50–51) and in more detail in the beginning of Acts (Acts 1:1–11). The ascension is crucial to Luke's narrative for two key reasons:

First, together with the resurrection, it serves as evidence that Jesus is indeed the Messiah. During Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost, he pointed out that although wicked people put Jesus to death, God raised Him from the dead and exalted Him to His right hand as Lord and Messiah. Jesus'

ascension is proof of His validation as the Messiah.

Second, it is from this position as reigning Lord and Messiah that Jesus pours out the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33). The Spirit's arrival served as confirmation that the end times had begun (Acts 2:16–21, citing Joel 2:28–32) and became the empowering and guiding force for the apostles as they took the Gospel to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

CONCLUSION

Luke's Gospel ends where it begins – in the Temple. Just before His disciples return to the Temple *“with great joy”* after witnessing Jesus' ascension, He gives them a final commission, which brings up many of the themes found throughout this Gospel of Luke.

*Luke 24:45-49: “Jesus says to them: “Thus it is written, that the **Messiah** is to **suffer** and to **rise** from the dead on the third day, and that **repentance and forgiveness of sins** is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from **Jerusalem**. You are **witnesses** of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been **clothed with power from on high.**”*



BETHEL AG CHURCH INTERNATIONAL WORSHIP CENTRE

#67 RING ROAD HEBBAL, BANGALORE 560024
24/7 PRAYER LINE: 080-67537777 | WWW.BETHEL.AG.IN