

## I. Intro and Prologue (Lk. 1:1-4)

- A. Many Other Accounts (vs 1) - Both Matthew and Mark's Gospels (and other non-canonized accounts) had already been circulating for five to ten years prior to Luke's Gospel. It is important to note that these three Gospels were written only 20 to 30 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. In other words, these accounts are incredibly reliable when you consider the nature of oral tradition and cultural establishment of fact-based confirmation of many eyewitness. (1 Cor. 15:5, written AD 55)
- B. Consecutive Order (vs 3) - Luke makes it clear that one of his motivations for writing his gospel was the desire to produce a document focused upon comprehensiveness and chronological accuracy.

*Luke identified the genre of his work as a narrative (an orderly "account," 1:1). It is a historical narrative in that it relates events that happened in the past in story form with an intense focus upon chronological accuracy and detail. - Dr. Tomas Constable*

- C. You may know the Exact Truth (vs 4) - Luke is not saying that his gospel is the only truthful one. The word translated "exact" literally means "safety or certainty". Luke is telling his readers that he wants his account to come alongside the other accounts in order to bring unwavering assurance of the truth of the christian faith. The Christian faith does not require believing things that are contrary to the facts but believing things that are true. Luke wrote his introduction in order to assure his readers that there was a factual basis for their faith.

## II. Announcement and Miracle Conception of John the Forerunner (Lk. 1:5-25)

- A. Zacharias (vs 5) - Zechariah's name means "Yahweh Remembers" and is significant here because the birth of John, whose name means "Yahweh Is [or Has Been] Gracious," was the fulfillment of a prophecy that God would send a forerunner to prepare the way for Israel's Messiah. David had divided the priesthood into 24 divisions and had placed the leader (Abijah in this case) of one priestly family at the head of each group. (1 Chron. 24:10; 2 Chron. 8:14)
- B. Righteous but Barren (vs 6-7) - Scripture tells us that God blesses the godly with children. She and her husband were right with God and followed Him faithfully. Surely they, along with those who knew them, wondered if their barrenness was because of their sin and God was withholding the blessing of children from them as a judgment.

1. (vs 6) Blameless does not mean sinless, it means that they dealt with sin in their lives quickly and as God required. (Ps. 127, 128; Phil. 2:15; 3:6; 1 Thess. 3:13; Heb. 8:7)
- C. Performing his Priestly Service (vs 8) - According to the Jewish historian Josephus, there were four divisions of the priests, and each one had more than 5,000 priests in it. There were so many priests in Zechariah's day that the great privilege of offering incense on the golden incense altar in the temple was a once in a lifetime event. The priests decided who would offer incense at the daily sacrifice, morning and evening, by casting lots. Obviously, God providentially arranged for Zechariah's selection. This occasion was undoubtedly a high point in his life and the greatest honor of his priestly career. (Esther 3:7; Prov. 16:33)
- D. Your Petition has Been Heard (vs 13) - As Zechariah stood in intercession and petition on behalf of His people, the angel Gabriel appeared and announced that both his intercessory prayer and his personal prayer had been heard. The Lord would give Zechariah a miracle child (Zechariah's personal prayer), and this child would be the forerunner of the messiah (Zechariah's intercessory prayer).

*It is doubtful that Zacharias prayed for a son when he was at the golden altar of incense. First, it might have seemed like such a selfish need. Second, since he and Elizabeth were both well advanced in years, they had probably given up on this prayer a long time ago. - David Guzik*

- E. He will be the Forerunner (vs 17) - The prophetic scriptures were clear that before the Messiah would come, God would send the prophet Elijah first to prepare the way. Jesus explained that John was a partial fulfillment of the prophecy of Messiah's forerunner. John would turn the hearts of many Israelites back to God, like the prophets had sought to do in Old Testament times. None of them was more successful or important than Elijah had been. He led the people back to Yahweh after Ahab and Jezebel had pushed Israel's apostasy (departure from God) further than it had ever gone, by instituting Baal worship as Israel's official religion. John would possess the same spirit and power that Elijah had possessed. In fact John would be filled with the Spirit for this assignment from his mother's womb. (Mal. 3:1; Mat. 11:10,14, 17:11; Mar. 9:12)
- F. Zacharias's Unbelief (vs 18) - Zacharias asked "How can I believe you?" In other words, having an angel show up and tell you was not enough for him to believe God. This is in contrast to Mary, who upon hearing the news asked, "How will this happen?" (Lk. 1:34)

- G. Elizabeth's Response to the Miracle (vs 24) - Elizabeth did not hide herself so that people could not see that she was pregnant since it was the first five months of her pregnancy. Rather, she wanted to consecrate herself in prayer and nearness to God in light of the miracle child growing inside her womb.

### III. **Announcement and Miracle of the Birth of Messiah (Luke 1:26-38)**

- A. The Announcement (vs 26) - In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, the same angel entered into Mary's family dwelling and greeted her with the announcement that she was favored by the Lord and that she would bear the long awaited Messiah.
1. The Town (vs 26) - Nazareth was such a small village that it was mostly unknown in the surrounding area. For this reason, Jesus was known for the region (Galilee) rather than the town (Nazareth). What does this say about God—and what He is like—to choose to come from such insignificant and humble beginnings? This desire of God for humility is seen in such a significant way all throughout Luke's narrative.
  2. Engaged (vs 27) - Historical Jewish culture and customs at that time was for daughters to be betrothed shortly after puberty. The husband-to-be would then at that time begin working on a home and a dowry, and upon the completion of the home and dowry price, the wedding would commence. This places Mary at around the age of 13 to 15 years of age when the Messiah's care and upbringing was entrusted to her.
  3. Mary's Response (vs 29) - The Greek word translated "perplexed" means that she had a hard time believing she was favored by God and that God was with her. Her question "How can this be?" was not a question of unbelief but rather pondering the "how" that this conception would take place. Her final statement is, "Let it be done according to your word". This is opposite of Zechariah who said, "How can I believe your word?"
- B. Declarations of Excellencies - Gabriel declares so many things concerning the identity and destiny of the miracle child. Just one of these aspects could be a book in and of itself. (2 Sam. 7:12-16; Is. 7:14)

1. You shall name Him Jesus (vs 31) - Many believe that the name Jesus means “God with Us” after the Isaiah 7 prophecy concerning him. Though Jesus is known in his identity as “God with Us”, the name Jesus actually means “God Saves”
2. He will be Great (vs 32) - Jesus is great in the perfection of His nature as the God man. Jesus is great in the height of His governmental office and power. Jesus is great in the multitude of his achievements. Jesus is great in the numbers of those He rescues. Jesus is great in the amount of praise and love He receives eternally.

*No one has influenced history more than Jesus Christ. “Is it not proven that he is great? Conquerors are great, and he is the greatest of them. Deliverers are great, and he is the greatest of them. Liberators are great, and he is the greatest of them. Saviours are great, and he is the greatest of them.” (Spurgeon)*

3. Son of the Most High (vs 32) - “The Most High” is a common designation of God in the Old Testament and it carried over into the New Testament. The Greeks also used the title, Most High, in order to describe their gods. In Semitic thought, a son was a carbon copy of his father, and the phrase “son of” was often used to refer to one who possessed his father's qualities. (Gen 14:18; Ps. 2:7-9; 89:26-29)
4. God will give Him the throne of His father David (vs 32) - Jesus would also be the long-expected Messiah, since God would give Him the throne of His father David. Today, Jesus is enthroned in heaven, but it is not on David's throne. David's throne is clearly and biblically an earthly throne located in Jerusalem. He must return and sit on David's earthly throne eternally in order to fulfill this prophecy. (2 Sam. 7:12- 14; Ps. 89:3-4, 28-29; Acts 2:29- 36)
5. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever (vs 33) - This statement would have had multiple implications in Mary’s day and still holds many implications today as only the sons of Judah, Benjamin, and some from Levi are accounted for. He will gather all the sons of Jacob upon the establishment of His earthly rule at His return, and the Messianic rule of the Son will continue forever. (Isa. 9:7; Dan. 7:14; Mic. 4:7)

6. He will be called the Son of God (vs 35) - In Jewish culture this statement meant that this child would be equal to God. Jesus did not *become* the Son of God; the declaration is that He would be recognized for what He always was and is called, the Son of God, recognizing His nature from all eternity. (John 5:18)

#### IV. Celebration and Joy of the Mothers and Sons (Lk 1:39-56)

A. So far the heroes of faith, and examples of the favored ones of Luke's Gospel are women, more specifically, women who the society of that day and ours would not aspire to be. One who bore the pain of a lifetime of barrenness in the midst of faithfulness and vehement prayer. The other, living a life of such insignificance and obligation to the culture of her time that no one would aspire to be her or know her. Both of these women's names and stories are now etched into eternity: women chosen to bear the herald of the Messiah, the one whom Jesus called the greatest man ever born of a woman, and the other, the one whom God entrusted with His only Son to be the eternal mother of our Lord. Mary spent the first three months of her pregnancy with her friend and relative, Elizabeth, staying until the birth of John and then departing back to her home in Nazareth.

1. Mary arose to Judah (vs 39) - Mary was given a sign from Gabriel (though she did not ask for one) that her relative Elizabeth was miraculously pregnant as well. She went the considerable distance to Judah, roughly between 80 and 100 miles. The trip was at least 5 to 7 days and dangerous, from the region of Galilee to the hill country of Judea.
2. Elizabeth's Proclamation (vs 42-45) - When Mary arrived, Elizabeth was at least six months pregnant. She regarded the fact that John leaped in her womb as an indication of his joy that Mary was pregnant with the Messiah. The Holy Spirit came upon Elizabeth, prompting her to greet Mary as the mother of the Messiah. The Spirit evidently gave her intuitive or revelatory understanding of Mary's role and pregnancy. "Blessed" means specially privileged because of God's unmerited favor. Elizabeth evidently meant that Mary was the most blessed among women. Mary was most blessed because God had chosen her to bear the Messiah. In this light, the worship of Mary and prayers to Mary that are practiced in some forms of Christianity are very misplaced.

- a. Both Elizabeth and Mary have now expressed their personal feelings of self worth. Mary was perplexed that God had chosen her and Elizabeth did not feel worthy enough to even have Mary come to her for friendship and help, as she was chosen to be the mother of the Messiah.
- B. The Magnificat (vs 46-55) - This utterance of Mary was clearly in the form of a song or poem (often called *the Magnificat*, after the Latin translation of the first few words) highly resembling Hannah's song. It also has at least 12 other allusions to the Old Testament. This means that Mary was a woman who studied and knew God's Word and was also a person of contemplation. The Scriptures were in her heart; she had been thinking upon the implications of the last few weeks and came out through her song. (1 Sam. 2:1-10).
1. He See's (vs 48-49) - The first part of the song is Mary's reflection on a God who not only sees but regards the state of individuals who think He does not see and does not care. Not only that, but He, through His power and might, has now caused all generations to come to see and regard Mary as well.
  2. He is Merciful (vs 50) - Mary recognizes that it was not because of any personal righteousness or strength that caused God to bring about the Messiah and Savior. Rather it is all predicated upon His Mercy and His Mercy alone.
  3. He Rules (vs 51-52) - With His own sovereign arm God brings down the pride of Man and scatters their might. God sovereignly raises up and tears down nations according to His will. Mary declares that much of the timing of His raising up and tearing down has to do with the levels of pride and humility that exist in the hearts of nations and their leaders. All this is in context to the child she carried. She saw her Son as one who is destined to tear down prideful nations and rise up humble nations.
  4. He keeps His Promises (vs 53-55) - He has and will continue to fill the spiritually hungry with good things and give help to those who are willing to serve Him from a place of need. The ultimate fulfillment of this aspect of who He is will be found in the giving of this child to humanity forever, to fulfill the promises of restoration He gave to the patriarchs.

**V. Birth and Naming of John the Forerunner (Lk. 1:57-66)**

A. The angel had told Zacharias that many would rejoice at his son's birth and as you can imagine, there was much rumor and speculation about Zacharias's condition and Elizabeth's pregnancy. John's birth seems very normal and non-dramatic. However, eight days after his birth it came time for his ceremonial circumcision and naming. At this time Zacharias was still unable to speak and hear and had been in this condition for 9 months. He was able to communicate by tablet as we will see as this story unfolds.

1. The Test (vs 57-63) - As the relatives and friends argued that Elizabeth was wrong in her conviction that her son should not be called Zacharias after his father (The Lord Remembers) but rather John (God has been Gracious). They had to make signs to Zacharias as he was not only mute but deaf because of his unbelief. At this point God offered Zacharias a second chance as He always does for all to come into agreement with what He has said.
2. The Goodness of God (vs 64-66) - The moment Zacharias wrote "His name is John", God's discipline was lifted off of him and he broke out in praise and prophecy. This miraculous event elevated the focus upon this child beyond what it already was in its given circumstances, thus causing multitudes more to ask themselves, "who is this child?" This was a beautiful example of how God in His wisdom uses all things for the good to those who love Him. If Zacharias and Elizabeth had not been barren their entire lives and then miraculously pregnant, if Zacharias had not been disciplined by the Lord for His disbelief and struck with the inability to speak or hear, then surely John's birth would have gone unnoticed and the multitudes would not have been positioned to herald the Messiah.

**VI. Zacharias' Prophecy (Lk. 1:67-80)**

A. The Song of Blessing (vs 67-79) - Zacharias' song has been called the *Benedictus*, from its first words in the Latin translation. The prophetic voice of the Lord had been silent for 400 years. Now, God spoke through Gabriel, through Elizabeth, through Mary, and now through Zacharias. When God spoke again, it was all connected to the theme of Jesus and His work. Zacharias could truly say, "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people." It was as if God was present for Israel (has visited) in a way not experienced for a long time. (Amos 8:11)

1. The Horn of Salvation (vs 69) - The word translated “horn” is predominantly used in the Old Testament to refer not to animals but to the altars in the tabernacle and temple. These horns likely took the shape of upward projections at the four corners of the altar. God commanded that the high priest “shall make atonement on its horns once a year” (Ex. 30:10), which took place on the Day of Atonement, when the blood of a bull and a goat was “put . . . on the horns of the altar all around” (Lev. 16:18). Likewise, the sin offering called for the blood of a bull to be put “on the horns of the altar” (Lev. 4:7). They held no small place in the ritual symbolism of God’s forgiveness that would be fulfilled by Christ. Given this background, the association of horns with the provision of atonement would have been a natural one for Zechariah who was a priest. When Gabriel appeared to Zechariah, the angel was standing next to the altar of incense, right next to those “horns” where the work of Christ had been symbolized for many centuries (Luke 1:11). On this Horn of salvation, the blood of atonement would be shed once and for all, and we will take hold of this horn all of our days, leaning upon the mercy and righteousness that was provided for us through the blood shed upon it.
2. To show Mercy (vs 72) - The theme of God's mercy, not man's righteousness, has now been mentioned multiple times in Luke's Gospel and we are barely getting started. Zacharias reinforces again that the Messiah was being given to us through Mercy and because of Mercy. (Hos. 6:6; Mat. 9:13; Mark 12:7)
3. So we might serve Him without Fear (vs 74) - Zacharias understood and prophesied that one of the aspects of the Messiah’s work would be to cause us to be able “to serve God without fear in righteousness and holiness forever”. This is the ultimate truth put forward in Romans 8:15, 2 Tim. 1:7, and 1 John 4:18 concerning the spirit of fear that we no longer have when we relate to God. How familiar Zacharias must have been with the spirit of fear that gripped him as he walked into the temple nine months earlier where many others had died in an attempt to be near to God's presence in their sinful state.
4. And you my Child (vs 76-77) - Zacharias now prophesies over John concerning his identity and message that he had been born to walk in from eternity past. John was to prepare people to receive the Messiah and His missional work.



5. To give the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of sins (vs 77) - We must understand that John was a preacher of holiness, sin, and the just judgment of God. This was so people would be ready to hear the message of mercy and forgiveness that Jesus would preach and see the work that He would accomplish through the cross and resurrection.
  6. The Light from on High (vs 78-79) - John was to point people to the light because the light would shine upon their darkness and cause them to see. The Light, Jesus, would also show them the way to walk in peace. (Is. 9:2)
- B. And the Child grew (vs 80) - The progressional long term work of God in one's life is also a very clear theme in Luke's Gospel. Though John had a miraculous birth and incredible high calling upon his life, he grew through years and years of adversity and faithfulness in the mundane. I believe that the desert or wilderness is the place where all of us are forged in depths of character and faith. So too, with the greatest man ever born of a woman, God's will was to raise him and prepare him in the wilderness, holding back the timing of his ministry until some 30 years later. The word "spirit" here refers not to the Holy Spirit but to John's spirit, or in other words, his personal character and nature.

## VII. Personal Study and Meditation

- A. Read Luke Chapter 1 this week
  - a. At a minimum, take 15 minutes sometime this week to read through Luke chapter 1. Keep a folder with notes and a journal
    1. Try and set a schedule for bible study and prayer once per week or more. Setting a schedule will exponentially increase your personal success in a lifestyle of bible study and prayer against the tyranny of the urgency and speed of our lives.
- B. Seeking Relational Encounter
  1. Do not seek to gain information or accomplish a task; set your heart and mind to encounter Jesus. Remember He is a person, His Spirit is a person, His Father is a person. God is not a subject to be studied but rather a person who longs for a deeper relationship with you.

2. Ask, Seek, and Knock - Right when you start, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal an aspect of who Jesus is to your heart and mind. Ask Him specifically to speak to you and highlight a specific word, line, or theme as you read through the chapter. Then, set your heart to listen as you read.
  - a. Journal - Write down your thoughts on the chapter. What was one thing that really stood out to you? Did you feel like God spoke something to you through your reading time?
  - b. Ask Questions - Talk to the Holy Spirit as you read. Ask questions, give feedback, and ask for understanding.
  - c. R.R.S.S.P. Acronym - Pick a single verse or two and then...
    1. Read It - Read the verse again slowly and then look at a couple different versions of the same verse.
    2. Write It - Write the verse down in your own words as if you were trying to talk to someone about it.
    3. Sing It - Sing the verse in your own words to music or acapella. Use the verse as a chorus and try and then come up with a few verses to your chorus. Try for this progression. Chorus, Verse 1, Chorus, Verse 2, Chorus, Chorus.
    4. Say It - Speak it out as if you were talking to your friend about the verse. Do a 5 min teaching or explanation to yourself or your friend.
    5. Pray It - Ask the Holy Spirit to cause this verse or the truths found in the verse to cause you to Love God more and/or have the truths of the verse be manifest in your life more.