



LUKE CHAPTER ONE

PREPARING THE WAY

John the
Baptist and
Jesus Christ

... their parents
played a key
role in the story

Zechariah

Joseph

Mary

Elizabeth



The Time is
Coming

Luke's
Gospel
Chapter 1



Luke 1: 1-4 – Dedication to Theophilus



A Roman (Gentile) student of Luke of noble standing OR simply a literary 'vehicle' – the name means 'friend of God' after all, so maybe Luke just meant 'Dear Reader'

'Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.'


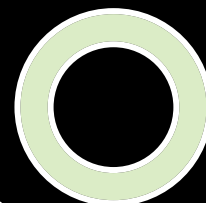


Luke 1: 5-7

Birth of John the Baptist Foretold

Elizabeth descends from the brother of Moses – Aaron – and Zechariah is a Jewish official.

Their standing in the community is beyond reproach, you might say they are 'pillars of the community'.

' In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years. '



Luke 1: 8-17

Gabriel's 1st appearance

His was NOT a random selection – he was chosen by God – note the promise made by Gabriel that John would be filled with the holy spirit before he is even born.

'Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared." '



Luke 1: 18-23

Zechariah is struck dumb!

And yet, despite his religion and the assurance of an ANGEL, Zechariah still asks for a SIGN for which he is reprimanded and struck mute (maybe deaf AND dumb), and it was witnessed by hundreds of people.

'And Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time." And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple. And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he kept making signs to them and remained mute. And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home.'

Luke 1: 24-25

Elizabeth hides herself away

'After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, "Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people." '

Is she afraid that her neighbours will 'talk about her'? She has nothing to be ashamed of does she, and yet she hides herself away until Mary comes to stay! Why?

Luke 1: 26-33

Gabriel makes another house call

Compare Mary's reaction to that of Zechariah – she is also scared and isn't sure of him - it's the 6th month of Elizabeth's term.

'In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favoured one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." '

Luke 1: 34-38

Mary accepts her fate

Mary also asks 'how' and yet Gabriel deals with her more gently and tells her of her cousin's pregnancy to show that 'nothing is impossible with God' and Mary submits.

'And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God. And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.'

We don't know know if Mary knew of Elizabeth's pregnancy – maybe she did and was visiting, but Mary would have been only weeks along and so this really is a supernatural moment.

Luke 1: 39-
45

Mary visits her
cousin

'In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord." '

Luke 1: 46-56

“The Magnificat”

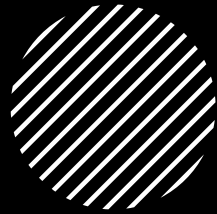
Mary would have been hugely reassured (and relieved) at her cousin's words and that goes some way to explaining why she now reacts in this way.

'And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.” And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home. '



Luke 1: 57-66

The Birth of John The Baptist



This is a huge break with tradition but as soon as the child is named, Zechariah can speak again because he has done as he was told, and he doesn't hesitate to praise God.

'Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father, but his mother answered, "No; he shall be called John." And they said to her, "None of your relatives is called by this name." And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called. And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And they all wondered. And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. And fear came on all their neighbours. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea, and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him.'

John 1: 67-80

Zechariah rejoices

Then Zechariah does exactly what Mary did on receiving reassurance – he waxes lyrical about his son and the Lord.

'And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel.'

Luke's Lesson on Grace and Faith: Mary and Zac

Click [here](#)

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- Both are visited by the angel Gabriel
 - Both are promised the miraculous birth of a son
 - Both are equally unfit to have a child
 - Both respond with equal perplexity

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- Zechariah's 'credentials' seem to commend him as the more likely recipient of God's grace
 - Mary on the other hand seems to have 'far less going for her' on the face of it and yet she is blessed
 - Yet he is struck dumb - and Mary isn't! Why?

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- Mary has the greater FAITH despite Zechariah's RELIGION

Through these contrasts, Luke shows us that ...

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- God doesn't bless people according to their age, sex or station in life
 - He blesses them according to HIS own good purposes
 - Grace is free and God has chosen to pour it out abundantly across the whole spectrum of humanity
 - Faith is the right and pleasing response to God's promises
 - And as with grace it is not reserved for the spiritual elite
 - The young and vulnerable CAN (and often do) surpass their elders in trusting God

As they say these days ... "You Couldn't Write it!"



And now for the main feature ...

Bible Notes from meeting on 13/12/22 (1)

- Who was Theophilus? The name appears twice in the Bible – in Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-3 – Luke wrote these books around 61-63AD which is when Paul was a prisoner in Rome and Luke was with him (2 Timothy 4:11). Luke's address of 'most excellent' is a Roman title of respect and possibly of official importance and the fact that he appears to be a 'student of Christ' suggests he is a Gentile to whom Luke wants to prove the divinity of Jesus. However, the name means 'friend of God' and so some have suggested that Luke was not addressing a real person at all, but almost as in 'Dear Reader' was simply addressing the person that was reading his books.
- Lyn commented that it seemed like a 'mentoring' relationship on the road to discipleship, demonstrating his careful research after travels with Peter and Paul; he is addressing us too!
- We agreed that the story of John the Baptist's conception shows 'God's perfect timing' – how despite their old age, Elizabeth and Zechariah late child was 'all part of the plan'
- They were 'favoured by God' even though she was 'barren' – they still gave over their lives to God
- Like Abraham and Sarah in the OT, they kept trusting God and were 'blessed' with Isaac
- God DOES hear our prayers though the timing of his interventions may surprise us

Bible Notes from meeting on 13/12/22 (2)

- Zechariah would have been terrified when he saw the angel, same as Mary, but he asks; 'how can I be sure?' and so doubts his words - he asks for a 'sign' but ITS AN ANGEL!
- But he's the only one in there and so must have written down his experience as he remembers it to tell others about it – he gave 'signs' but that wouldn't have been enough!
- Because God made him mute (possibly deaf AND dumb) he wasn't able to raise any doubts in people's minds as to what he'd seen – he HAD to wait to tell his story and only once it was fulfilled (there was his 'proof'!) e.g. John was *'filled with the holy spirit, even from his mother's womb!'*
- As soon as the prophecy is fulfilled, Zechariah is able to speak, and he wastes no time in praising the Lord
- The contrast between the humble home of Mary and the Holy of Holies couldn't be sharper!
- Mary is told about Elizabeth – she wouldn't have known as her cousin had kept herself locked away for 5 months and this happened in the 6th month – to demonstrate that “nothing is impossible with God” and to tell her that she is not alone, she has a friend, someone who will 'vouch for her' – 'if it happened to me it can happen to you!'
- Mary doesn't know what the grand design is, but she trusts 100% and doesn't doubt the angel

Bible Notes from meeting on 13/12/22 (3)

- Contrasts between the 16 year-old and 60 year-old are intentionally extreme, but they both have strong unshakeable FAITH
- Did the Lord make it easy (easier) for Mary? She immediately goes away to be with her cousin, who has also experienced a miraculous pregnancy – she doesn't doubt Mary either, in fact she recognizes her baby through the supernatural reaction of her own (and Mary could only have been a few weeks pregnant at this point!) and she reinforces the angel's message to Mary
- Mary BURSTS into praise at this point – it's the confirmation that she needed
- She recognizes her place in history – “ALL generations will call me blessed!” – astonishing!
- Mary knew her scriptures, so she could take comfort in them – any woman in Judea would have known that they might be called upon to be the mother of the Messiah and so be blessed by God
- God doesn't care too much for TRADITION – Zechariah would have though – tradition comes a long way second to the will of God
- Joseph is yet to figure in this story, but compare his reaction to Zechariah's