

1 Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us,

2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us,

3 it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus,

4 that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.

a) Luke was not recording an analogy. He was not recording a metaphor. He was not penning fiction! He was recording non-fiction: verifiable evidence of everything Jesus had done as confirmed by multiple witnesses.

Luke was a reporter. As a physician by trade, Luke knew what it meant to gather credible evidence. He knew the importance of proving beyond the shadow of a doubt that everything the apostles claimed to have seen had actually taken place.

The Book of Luke, along with the rest of New Testament Scripture, was never meant to be interpreted as allegory. We should never relegate Scripture to the fiction aisle in the halls of our beliefs. What Jesus said, He did; and what He did, He asks you to do in His name.

Will you take Him at His word?

b) Are You Certain?

Luke was “certain” of the things he wrote. He believed the Gospel with all his heart! He wrote them to Theophilus so that his friend might be convinced of the same.

Are you so convinced Jesus is real that you can't help but talk to other people about Him? If not: *no shame!* Certainty comes with experience. God will show you He is real, so He can gain your trust. It's not *your job* to try really hard to become certain that the Gospel is true; it's the Holy Spirit's role to show You He is real and fill you with certainty!

Father, make me certain that the Gospel is true! I want to tell *everyone* about Jesus; and I'm asking You to fill me with the confidence I need to boldly proclaim the Truth that Jesus is Lord.

5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

a) Elizabeth and Zacharias both had a priestly lineage! And *so do you*.

Rev. 1:5-6: To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, 6 and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

7 But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years.

a) Elizabeth's barrenness had nothing to do with sin! She and Zacharias were both "blameless" (v 6). Just because you are experiencing hardship, does not mean you are doing something *wrong*.

Satan – our enemy – is the author of sickness and disease. Satan is the author of barrenness. But God had a better plan for Zacharias and Elizabeth. Because they waited in faith, He would bless them with John the Baptist as a son!

Sickness and disease happen; but do not swallow the lie that God is using them to teach you a lesson. Jesus spent His entire earthly ministry eradicating sickness and disease; and God will eradicate them from your life, as you wait in faith for your healing to come!

Father, thank You for my healing. I confess that my sickness has nothing to do with me. I don't want to bear it anymore. I tell it to go – now – in Jesus' name!

b) Blameless but Barren

Elizabeth was *blameless*; but she was also *barren*. Some Christians believe that sickness is the result of sin: God punishing you for something you did wrong. But if that were the case, how could Elizabeth be both *blameless* and *barren*?

Elizabeth's barrenness had *nothing* to do with sin. Just because you are experiencing hardship, does not mean you are doing something *wrong*. Satan – our enemy – is the author of sickness and disease. Satan is the author of barrenness. But God had a *better plan* than barrenness for Zacharias and Elizabeth. Because they waited in faith, He would bless them with John the Baptist as a son!

Sickness and disease happen; but do not swallow the lie that God is the one bringing them on you to teach you a lesson. Jesus spent His entire earthly ministry eradicating sickness and disease; and God will eradicate them from your life, as you wait in faith for healing to come!

Father, thank You for my healing. I know sickness is not Your will. I don't want to bear it anymore. I tell it to go – now – in Jesus' name!

8 So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division,
9 according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

10 And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense.

a) Zacharias was serving, and people were praying; and the angel of the Lord showed up!

service + corporate prayer => encounter

11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

a) Zacharias' miracle was in the presence! Get close to God, and watch how He blesses you!

12 And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.

a) God blessed Zacharias with an amazing encounter! The angel Gabriel personally appeared to him to announce the birth of his son, John the Baptist. But why did the angel ever show up in the first place?

Zacharias prayed. God had a plan; but Zacharias had to pray. Gabriel arrived because of his prayer. God heard Zacharias and Elizabeth crying out for a son, and sent Gabriel with the answer.

God cannot answer prayers you refuse to pray. Vocalize your requests. Make them known to God! Then, sit back, relax, and watch Him answer.

Father, give me boldness to pray for seemingly impossible things! Give me courage to pray for the supernatural to overflow in my life. I know You cannot answer any prayer I refuse to pray; so help me to open my mouth and pray, in Jesus' name!

b) The first angelic message for Zacharias was: do not be afraid!

c) If you know your prayers are heard, you will never be afraid!

d) Elizabeth would bear Zacharias a son.

14 And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth.

a) The end products of the fulfillment of God's promise are 1) joy and 2) gladness.

15 For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

a) John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit, even from the womb.

i. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit as well (v 41), which illustrates the power than even an anointed baby can have to bring his parents to Christ.

b) Romans 8:11 is therefore a legal prayer for children, even if they are unborn.

c) How can Christians support abortion if they know God can anoint children even while they are still in the womb?

d) Are abstinence from alcohol and being filled with the Spirit connected?

16 And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.

a) The purpose of the presence of the Holy Spirit is to "turn many...to the Lord their God." God is *their God*: even if they don't know it!

17 He will also 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 a people prepared for the Lord."

a) John the Baptist never served Elijah; but he would still go forth, "...in the spirit and power of Elijah."

18 And Zacharias said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years."

19 And the angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings.

20 But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time."

a) Whenever God makes a promise to us, we have a choice: we can respond with faith, or we can respond with fear. Zacharias exhibited a fear response. He and his wife, Elizabeth, were promised a son: God offered them deliverance from their barrenness. Yet instead of leaping for joy at God's promise, Zacharias responded by asking, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years" (v 18). He responded with fear, and his fear gave way to verbalized doubt.

The miracle-canceling potential of Zacharias' words was so strong that God made him mute. God was not willing to allow Zacharias to cancel his own miracle with doubt-filled speech, so he shut him up. When we let our doubt become speech, we can actually get in the way of the fulfillment of God's promises.

What has God promised you? Are you partnering with His promise, and speaking it out over your life, in faith?

21 And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he lingered so long in the temple.

22 But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless.

23 And so it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house.

24 Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying,

a) Conception happened *after* the visitation. It was for this reason that Gabriel shut Zacharias' mouth: so that he could not cancel conception with his doubt.

Speak life!

25 "Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people."

26 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth,

27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

28 And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!"

29 But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was.

a) "Blessed" meant pregnant. How, Mary wondered, could that have possibly happened, since she had not known a man?

30 Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

a) When God promises you something that seems bigger than you're ready for, don't be afraid! He knows what He is doing. It is not a curse; it is a blessing. You have found favor with Him!

31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus.

32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.

33 And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

a) There is *no end* to the Kingdom of Jesus. It cannot end: not ever!

34 Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"

a) God will cause you to *give birth* to His plan by the power of His Holy Spirit, even if it doesn't make sense in the natural!

35 And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.

a) The presence and the power of the Holy Spirit will make you pregnant when you say yes to knowing Jesus!

b) The Holy Spirit

God presented Mary with impossible odds. Mary was a virgin: she had never "known a man" (v 34). Yet the angel Gabriel came to her and announced some seemingly impossible news: She would conceive and "bring forth a Son" (v 31). Mary was chosen to bring Jesus into the world! But in the face of these impossible odds, Mary had a practical question: "How can this be?"

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you," Gabriel answered (v 35). Mary couldn't do it herself; but the Holy Spirit could do it in her! And any time you are faced with impossible, insurmountable odds, this is how God's promise is going to come to pass. The Holy Spirit will come upon you. The power of God will overshadow you! What God has promised, He will perform.

You can't do it. But the Holy Spirit can! Are you ready for Him to do a mighty work in you? Are you ready to lean on Him like never before?

So he answered and said to me: "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the Lord of hosts." – Zech. 4:6

Father, thank You for the power of Your Holy Spirit. Help me to never try and do *anything* on my own! I will lean and rely on Your Holy Spirit, in Jesus' name!

36 Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren.

37 For with God nothing will be impossible."

a) Elizabeth – a woman whom doctors said was too old to have a child – was pregnant. Mary – a woman whom doctors said was too young to have a child – was pregnant. With God, nothing is impossible!

i. See Gen 18:14.

38 Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

a) This was a faith response: the opposite of Zacharias' fear reaction (see v 20). Mary accepted everything God had for her.

b) The difference between Mary's response and Zacharias' response is the phrase, "How shall I know this?" (v 20) Zacharias knew because Gabriel visited him! Mary did not counter Gabriel's authority; she simply inquired as to how the logistics would work.

39 Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah,

40 and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth.

41 And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

a) John's spirit leaps because the Messiah is so close to his mother. Even though he is not yet born, his spirit is communicating with the Holy Spirit.

i. Here we see a tangible manifestation as a result of that communication.

b) Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit because her son was already overwhelmed by His presence.

i. This should be taken as encouragement for every son and daughter to expect their parents to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

42 Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!

43 But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

a) The Holy Spirit immediately showed Elizabeth the task He had given Mary.

44 For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.

45 Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord."

a) Zacharias responded to God's promise with fear and doubt; Mary responded with faith. Gabriel visited Mary, just as he visited Zacharias. But whereas Zacharias responded with, "How shall I know this?" (Lk 1:18), Mary responded with a much more faith-filled refrain: "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word" (v 38).

Mary said yes to God. She accepted His promise, and partnered with God through productive (in other words, not destructive) speech.

Our words have incredible power. We can unwittingly cancel or intentionally confirm God's plans for us in an instant. God spoke the world into existence in Genesis 1. Then He made us in His image (Gen 1:27). When God's Holy Spirit is present to affect change, our words can introduce His Word into any situation and bring about atmosphere-shifting change!

b) When we *believe*, God will do what He has promised to do!

46 And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord,

47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

48 For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.

49 For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name.

50 And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation.

a) Fear of God brings not only wisdom (Prov 1:7), but also mercy.

51 He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

52 He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly.

53 He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty.

54 He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy,

55 As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and to his seed forever."

56 And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house.

57 Now Elizabeth's full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son.

58 When her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her.

a) Her neighbors were not filled with envy, and they did not become jealous. They celebrated Elizabeth's victory *with her*. Do you participate in celebrating victory with your friends? Or do you wish the victory was yours?

b) Elizabeth's birth was a testimony!

c) Your Life Is A Testimony!

Elizabeth's birth was a testimony to all "her neighbors and relatives." They knew what she had been going through, and they saw God's goodness put on full display. They witnessed His great mercy, and they rejoiced!

Share with the people around you. Tell them what you are going through. Have the courage to be vulnerable with your neighbors and relatives. Then, pray that God would come through and deliver on His promises: not just for your sake, but also for theirs. Your life will be a testimony to every man, woman, and child you meet on the way.

Father, help me to be a bold witness! I want to tell the world my testimony. Give me the courage to be vulnerable so my neighbors can see my victory, in Jesus' name!

59 So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias.

60 His mother answered and said, "No; he shall be called John."

61 But they said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name."

62 So they made signs to his father--what he would have him called.

63 And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, "His name is John." So they all marveled.

a) As soon as Zacharias agreed with God's word through writing, his mute burden was lifted! Agreement activates freedom.

Zacharias' response was immediate, spontaneous praise.

64 Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God.

65 Then fear came on all who dwelt around them; and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea.

66 And all those who heard them kept them in their hearts, saying, "What kind of child will this be?" And the hand of the Lord was with him.

67 Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

a) God does not hold grudges. Zacharias had been shut up, so as not to cancel God's promises. Yet as soon as his tongue was loosed, God prophesied through him.

It does not matter if you have spoken out words of doubt and indecision in the past; make the decision to trust God, and He will trust you with His word!

68 "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people,
69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David,
70 As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began,
71 That we should be saved from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us,
72 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant,
73 The oath which He swore to our father Abraham:
74 To grant us that we, Being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear,

a) The purpose of salvation is so that we, "Might serve Him without fear." This is our ultimate purpose: all that we have been created to do. It should also be our ultimate priority!

75 In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.

76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways,

a) Jesus calls you a "greater" prophet than John the Baptist:

"For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." – Lk. 7:28

Your mission, then, is to go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways. You have the distinct honor of going places and meeting people who have not received Jesus, and inviting Him in! Where you go, He will follow.

77 To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins,
78 Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us;

79 To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace."

80 So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel.