

## **Lesson 3 Luke 1:1-56 -Prologue and Birth Announcements of John and Jesus**

As we begin our study of the Gospel according to Luke, there are several themes that we should look for as we read. Luke's Gospel emphasizes the work of the **Holy Spirit** in both the Gospel and its sequel, Acts of the Apostles. Take note of those occasions where Luke uses **prayer** as an important part the life of Jesus and his disciples. Luke also shows Jesus' **compassion for and inclusion of outcasts** and otherwise unrespectable members of society. In this Gospel, Jesus has great **concern and respect for women. Women are mentioned by name** and are important members of the Christian community. In Luke, **Jesus is the Savior** of repentant humanity. He is Savior, the one who **saves His believers from the consequences of sin**. Luke also stresses the **importance of the Temple and Jerusalem**, and also **the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy**. Again, look for these themes as you read the Gospel of Luke.

**1. Read the introduction to the Gospel According to Luke in your bible. Share any interesting information that you find there.**

**2. Read Luke 1:1-4 and the footnotes about these verses. What do we learn about the *author* of this Gospel and his reasons or methods for writing this Gospel? Who is Theophilus?**

**Luke 1:1-4** Since many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the events that have been fulfilled among us, <sup>2</sup> just as those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning and ministers of the word have handed them down to us, <sup>3</sup> I too have decided, after investigating everything accurately anew, to write it down in an orderly sequence for you, most excellent Theophilus, <sup>4</sup> so that you may realize the certainty of the teachings you have received.

**3. Read Luke 1:5-11. What do we know about Zechariah and Elizabeth? Which of these verses are used to show the faithful, and "righteous" character of this couple?**

**Luke 1:5-11** <sup>5</sup> In the days of Herod, King of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah of the priestly division of Abijah; his wife was from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. <sup>6</sup> Both were righteous in the eyes of God, observing all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly. <sup>7</sup> But they had no child, <sup>[d]</sup> because Elizabeth was barren and both were advanced in years. <sup>8</sup> Once when he was serving as priest in his division's turn before God, <sup>9</sup> according to the practice of the priestly service, he was chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary of the Lord to burn incense. <sup>10</sup> Then, when the whole assembly of the people was praying outside at the hour of the incense offering, <sup>11</sup> the angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right of the altar of incense.

**4. Read Luke 1:12-17 and footnotes, 2 Kings 2:11-12 and Malachi 3:23. What is significant about John's association with the prophet Elijah? Why does it say that John will not drink wine or strong drink?**

**Luke 1:12-17** <sup>12</sup> Zechariah was troubled by what he saw, and fear came upon him. <sup>13</sup> But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall name him John. <sup>14</sup> And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, <sup>15</sup> for he will be great in the sight of [the] Lord. He will drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will be filled with the holy

Spirit even from his mother's womb, <sup>16</sup> and he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. <sup>17</sup> He will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of fathers toward children and the disobedient to the understanding of the righteous, to prepare a people fit for the Lord."

**2 Kings 2:11-12** As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. <sup>12</sup> Elisha saw this and cried out, "My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!" And Elisha saw him no more.

**5. Read Luke 1:18-25. Why was Zechariah unable to speak? Do you think this too harsh?**

**Luke 1:18-25** <sup>18</sup> Then Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." <sup>19</sup> And the angel said to him in reply, "I am Gabriel, who stand before God. I was sent to speak to you and to announce to you this good news. <sup>20</sup> But now you will be speechless and unable to talk until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled at their proper time."<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile the people were waiting for Zechariah and were amazed that he stayed so long in the sanctuary. <sup>22</sup> But when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He was gesturing to them but remained mute. <sup>23</sup> Then, when his days of ministry were completed, he went home. <sup>24</sup> After this time his wife Elizabeth conceived, and she went into seclusion for five months, saying, <sup>25</sup> "So has the Lord done for me at a time when he has seen fit to take away my disgrace before others."

**6. Read footnotes for Luke 1:25. What is the "disgrace" that Elizabeth speaks of here?**

**7. Read Luke 1:26-38. How is the announcement of Jesus' birth similar to the announcement of John's birth? How are they different?**

**8. What does Gabriel reveal about *who* Mary's child is to be? Note the titles that Gabriel uses for the child. See Luke 1:26-28.**

**9. Read Luke 1:39-56. How does Mary respond to Gabriel's message in these verses?**

**10. Reflection. Look back at today's readings. How important is faith or believing in the Word of God? (Compare how Zachariah, Elizabeth and Mary respond to God's messenger.)**