

Much of the material in chapter one of the Gospel of Luke consists of material unique to Luke's Gospel. The dedication to Theophilus, the promise of John's birth, the announcement of Jesus' birth to Mary, Mary's visit to Elizabeth, and the birth of John the Baptist are narratives not found in any of the other gospels. The prayer of Mary in Luke 1:46-55, **The Magnificat**, and Zachariah's prayer, now called the **Benedictus**, are thought to have been used in worship in the earliest of Christian communities. Also in this chapter, are Elizabeth's words that are so familiar to us in the **Hail Mary**.

1. In Luke 1, we see how Mary, Zachariah, and Elizabeth are moved to thank God for great blessings in their lives. Recall a time of when you felt so blessed that you felt compelled to offer prayer of thanks.

2. Check for footnotes in your bible to see if you can discover the significance of naming Elizabeth and Zachariah's son *John*. See Luke 1:13 and Luke 1:59-63 and footnotes.

Luke 1:13 ¹³ 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.

Luke 1:59-63 ⁵⁹ When they came on the eighth day to circumcise the child, they were going to call him Zechariah after his father, ⁶⁰ but his mother said in reply, "No. He will be called John." ⁶¹ But they answered her, "There is no one among your relatives who has this name." ⁶² So they made signs, asking his father what he wished him to be called. ⁶³ He asked for a tablet and wrote, "John is his name," and all were amazed.

3. Read Luke 1: 57-65 and Luke 1:13 (above) and 1:20. What is the importance of *the time* at which Zachariah's voice was returned to him?

Luke 1:20 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."

Luke 1:57-66 ⁵⁷ When the time arrived for Elizabeth to have her child, she gave birth to a son. ⁵⁸ Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy toward her, and they rejoiced with her. ⁵⁹ When they came on the eighth day to circumcise the child, they were going to call him Zechariah after his father, ⁶⁰ but his mother said in reply, "No. He will be called John." ⁶¹ But they answered her, "There is no one among your relatives who has this name." ⁶² So they made signs, asking his father what he wished him to be called. ⁶³ He asked for a tablet and wrote, "John is his name," and all were amazed. ⁶⁴ Immediately his mouth was opened, his tongue freed, and he spoke blessing God. ⁶⁵ Then fear came upon all their neighbors, and all these matters were discussed throughout the hill country of Judea. ⁶⁶ All who heard these things took them to heart, saying, "What, then, will this child be?" For surely the hand of the Lord was with him.

4. Why were the towns people *frightened* at the events surrounding the circumcision of John? See Luke 1:57-66.

5. **What was it that compelled Zachariah to publicly deliver his prayer? See Luke 1:67.**

Luke 1:67-68. Then Zechariah his father, filled with the holy Spirit, prophesied, saying:⁶⁸ “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, for he has visited and brought redemption to his people.

6. **What does the prayer of Zachariah proclaim about *fulfillment* of Old Testament prophecy and covenantal promises? See Luke 1:68-79.**

Luke 1:68-79 “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, for he has visited and brought redemption to his people.⁶⁹ He has raised up a horn for our salvation within the house of David his servant,⁷⁰ even as he promised through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old:⁷¹ salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us,⁷² to show mercy to our fathers and to be mindful of his holy covenant⁷³ and of the oath he swore to Abraham our father, and to grant us that,⁷⁴ rescued from the hand of enemies, without fear we might worship him ⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

⁷⁶ And you, child, will be called prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,⁷⁷ to give his people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins,⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God by which the daybreak from on high will visit us ⁷⁹ to shine on those who sit in darkness and death’s shadow, to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

7. **What *titles* does Zachariah use for his son in his prophetic prayer?**

8. **Look over Luke 1 in its entirety. Which of Luke’s *themes* can you identify in this chapter?**

Luke’s themes:

The work of the **Holy Spirit**

Use of and importance of prayer

Compassion for and inclusion of the **poor and outcasts**.

Concern and respect **for women**. (Including naming women in the Gospel.)

Identification of **Jesus as Savior**. Believers are saved from the consequence of sin.

Importance of the **Temple and Jerusalem**.

Fulfillment of **Old Testament prophecy**.

9. **Is it comforting to see how our prayers have their roots in Sacred Scripture?**