

“Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD”

Luke 1:1-38

Berean Baptist Church

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INTRODUCTION

Luke 1:1-4 Luke's Purpose. Luke starts by telling us exactly why he is writing this gospel and the book of Acts to follow...

Vs 1-2 Others have already written down the marvelous history that is the sure hope of the Christian community. And those accounts were being delivered to others by those who lived them and were now preaching the message.

Vs 3 And so Luke decided to compose these accounts into one great history that we call the “Gospel According to Luke.”

Vs 1-3 Luke's Gospel is based on carefully collected interviews and stories " delivered them unto us." The impression of this introduction is one of an educated and conscientious investigator who has carefully prepared the most detailed account of a world-shaking event.

“perfect understanding of all things from the very first” The **“Very first”** is the beginning of the events of the Gospel. Luke is saying that he has learned about every important event from the beginning of the story to its end. And so Luke feels compelled to tell the story.

Vs 3 “most excellent Theophilus,” Luke's history is addressed to someone of wealth or rank named Theophilus. We don't know anything about him other than he was being instructed in the faith. His name means “one who loves God” and indeed Luke is written to all who love God, for this purpose:

Vs 4 “That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.”

This certain knowledge is so much more than being sure about facts. It is a deeply practical and personal understanding that changes the way we see the world and ourselves. This the knowledge that a master gives to his disciples, a full and sure understanding of life.

Luke is written to disciples so that we may better see God working in history, and the perfection of God's work in history: when He came in.

This is not just a history but it is not just a list of events; for Luke history is going somewhere, it is a plan being fulfilled by God.

Christian, prepare to meet your Lord! Know, trust, and follow Jesus more faithfully; this is the work of a disciple of Christ!

From our passage today, we should rejoice and trust in God's work!

Luke 1:5-10 A People Living in Darkness

Vs 5 “in the days of Herod” This is a short way to speak of a long, sad time. The last prophet was killed 400 years ago, the Holy City was haunted by profane pagans, God's people were abused and humiliated every day, most of the religious leaders were either spiritually dead hypocrites or worldly compromisers, and the kind of Judah (Herod the Great) was a sickly murderous gentile who has been installed by his Roman overlords as a mockery of "the king of the Jews."

Vs 5-6 Zacharias and Elisabeth were both from priestly families. They were both “**righteous before God**” having a relationship with God by faith, and they were both “**blameless**” as to the outward commandments of the Law; they were sincere and faithful in their walk with God.

Vs 7 But they could not have children. This a shame and cause for scorn to Elisabeth.

Although they were righteous before God and without fault from a human perspective, Elisabeth would be considered a failure by her society.

Vs 8-10 This is a rare honor and normally it only came once in a lifetime. Zacharias would go into the holy place of the temple and kneel before "the vale of the holy of holies" and worship God.

There Zacharias was left alone in that place to offer the burning incense and pray. He was an old man, and sure to die without children, this day would seem like the most important day of his life. Luke's Gospel is about God working in the world...

Luke 1:11-17 A Promise of God's Work

Vs 11 “And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord” The presence of angels in the temple were expected by the priests. But according to legend, the last time anyone saw an angel in the temple was when another priest, also named Zacharias, was murdered in the temple (2 Chr 22:20) – that was near the beginning of these dark times.

Vs 14 John will bring joy to his parents and many others

Vs 15 “John will be great before the Lord” Not because of John's own greatness, but because he gives glory to God; “John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh (Luke 3:16).”

Vs 15 “and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink” This echos the holy Nazarites of Numbers 6; people who made special vows to God and would abstain from normal practices as part of their sanctification.

We don't know if John was a Nazarite, but his way of life paints the picture of one who is set apart and lives differently. Rather than being filled with wine, John would be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Vs 15 “and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.” This is said of no one else in the bible. Jesus said of John, “Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist (Luke 7:28).”

Vs 16 “...shall he turn...turn the hearts...” John will be a prophet of repentance and conversion.

Vs 17 For Zacharias' generation the great prophet Elijah was just a story. God used to work among His people when the prophet Elijah called fire from heaven and fought with evil king Ahab. But, for Zacharias, that was almost a thousand years ago. And no one had heard a word from God for at least 400 years.

This is an amazing set of promises, and it is only a preparation for better promises. God is working!

Luke 1:18-20 A Response to God's Work

Vs 18 Zacharias' reaction to the promise is surprising. The angel said, “**thy prayer is heard.**” So, why

is this so hard to believe? Has Zacharias been praying for decades never really believing that God would answer his prayer?

The very fact that Zacharias was conversing with an angel in the temple of God should have given him great hope, but he does not believe.

Vs 19 “I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God” Gabriel's name means something like "the heroic strength of God." He does not only stand here, in the temple which is a shadow of the Temple in heaven, but he also stands in the very presence of God.

Vs 20 Zacharias wanted a sign and he'll get one. The angel brought him "glad tidings" - good news!- that anyone would be thrilled to share, but he won't be able to. He was told first but he won't be able to tell anyone until it is all done.

Trust God's work and be careful what you ask for!

Luke 1:21-25 Even When Man Fails, God is Working!

Vs 21-25 We should not be too hard on Zacharias. His response was a lack of faith, but he lived in a dark time where there was not much faith to be found.

God's work was fulfilled, His promise was kept, even though Zacharias doubted.

Trust God's work because he is faithful even when we are not; His promises are not kept by human strength!

Luke 1:26-33 A Better Promise

Vs 26 The message in the temple was not the only message entrusted to Gabriel. He spoke in the Temple, in the symbolic presence of God, to a professional minister and Godly man. And he was not believed.

Sixth months after Elisabeth conceived, Gabriel is sent to Galilee, a land of pagans – a people who walked in darkness and lived under the shadow of death (Isa 9:1-2).

Vs 27 Mary was engaged to Joseph.

Vs 28-30 Notice the angel address "fear" both greetings (Vs 13, 30). But Mary gets a better greeting than Zacharias.

Vs 31 Mary would have a son whose name means “salvation of God.”

Vs 32 He will be the unique son of God.

Vs 32-33 He will sit upon the throne of David and rule an eternal kingdom.

Rejoice and trust in the promise of God!

CONCLUSION

Luke 1:34-38 A Better Response

Rejoice in Mary's faith!

Vs 34 Mary and Zacharias both ask questions, but questions of very different types. Zacharias asked, "why should I believe this?" But, Mary asked, "how could that happen?" One is a question of doubt and the other is a question of amazement.

Consider where faith was found. In the Temple, before the holy altar, and holy lights, and holy bread, a mighty angel appeared to a venerable priest and found doubt.

In a land of pagans, in a poor and despised country, that same angel appeared to a young woman of no reputation. But there, faith was found.

Expect God's blessing among the humble and needed and rejoice in faith!

Vs 36-37 This passage tells of two major promises: John and Jesus. The promise concerning John was doubted, and the promise concerning Jesus was believed. But both were fulfilled. God is faithful even when people are not, and His promises do not depend on the will of men.

Do not be discouraged when people fail because we depend on the power of God, not men; "For with God nothing shall be impossible."

Vs 31-33 But most of all what we take from this story, really the whole point of the Gospel of Luke, is that God is working in the world. God's salvation has come into the world and walked with men, and He will again. He will sit upon the throne of David and His rule will have no end.

God is working in the world, the King has come, and His kingdom is coming.

Rejoice and trust in God's work!