

LUKE

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Luke chapter 1 as we continue our study through the Word of God. This evening we will begin the third and final book of the Synoptic Gospel's; Matthew, Mark and now Luke.

The Gospel of John doesn't cover the same things as these other three Gospels do and that is why it is not considered synoptic (to see with or together), but we will deal more with that when we get to John.

Now Luke was a Gentile, the only Gentile writer in the New Testament. In Colossians chapter 4 Paul lists fellow laborers in Christ who are "**of the circumcision**" or Jewish. Then Paul speaks of those who are not, they are Gentiles. Thus, in Colossians 4:14 we are told, "**Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you.**"

Paul tells us in Colossians that Luke was a Greek physician, a brilliant man and yet, physicians in those days were slaves. Thus, Luke probably worked as a slave for a Roman family who was set free at some point after his conversion to Christ. And Theophilus, the one who Luke was writing to here and in the book of Acts, may have been his owner!

It is also possible that both Luke and Acts make up Paul's defense brief for his trial before Caesar, since Acts leaves Paul waiting for that trial. That is speculation just as we are speculating that Theophilus was Luke's master. What we do know is that Luke wrote this letter to this man. Also, keep in mind that Luke stayed with Paul during his second imprisonment, right to the end. Shortly before his martyrdom Paul wrote Timothy that, "**Only Luke is with me**" (II Timothy 4:11). What happened to Luke after the apostle's martyrdom we do not know.

Remember when we began our study of the New Testament back in the Gospel of Matthew, we saw how that each Gospel gives us a different picture of Christ. Matthew presents Jesus as the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, and King of Kings, written to the Jews.

Mark presents Jesus as the suffering servant, coming to serve man and not be served, written to the Romans.

John presents Jesus as God, the Sovereign over all, written in a sense, to the church.

And Luke presents Jesus the man, His humanity as the phrase “**the Son of man**” is used some 25 times in this Gospel. Thus, as Luke gives us the genealogy of Jesus he doesn't just take us back to Abraham, as Matthew does, but all the way back to Adam, the first man. And we will see that when we get to Luke chapter 3. Also, keep in mind that Luke, being a Greek, is writing to the Greeks.

Now what was the timeframe of the writing of this Gospel? Keep in mind that Nero's persecution of Christians began in 64 A. D. with Rome burning. And Acts closes with Paul still alive. Yes, the persecution had begun and it would continue to grow. So Acts had to be written before 64 A. D. and the Gospel of Luke, being the first of these two letters, must have been written even earlier, maybe 58-60 A. D. Keep in mind that Paul's first imprisonment was from around 60 to 62 A. D. And we are going to see that Luke did not get this information from sight but he interviewed people who had experienced the Lord and from that he wrote these things down. Now, because Luke was not an eyewitness to these events some like to argue that it must not be an accurate account. Don't believe that! Luke was a physician and he cared much for details, as we shall see. Listen to what happened to one man who tried to negate the writings of Luke. We are told,

Over 100 years ago, William Ramsay, a young English scholar, went to Asia Minor with the expressed purpose of proving that the history given by Luke in his gospel and in the Acts was inaccurate. His professors had confidently said that Luke could not be right.

He began to dig in the ancient ruins of Greece and Asia Minor, testing for ancient terms, boundaries, and other items which would be a dead giveaway if a writer had been inventing this history at a later date as claimed. To his amazement, he found that the New Testament Scriptures were accurate to the tiniest detail. So convincing was the evidence that Ramsay himself became a Christian and a great biblical scholar. We still look upon Sir William Ramsay's books as being a classic as far as the history of the New Testament is concerned.

- Science Returns to God

In fact, the vocabulary and style are so refined that Luke's Gospel has been compared to various writings of classical Greek!

Now as we begin our study here in Luke we will see a short introduction and then Luke is going to elaborate on John the Baptist. He will give to us some information that the other Gospels were silent on.

With that said, let's begin reading in Luke chapter 1 beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us this evening as we study through His Word!

LUKE 1**VERSES 1-4**

As I have said, Luke was not an eyewitness but a researcher of these things, a researcher of the truth. The Greek word for “**eyewitness**” is AUTOPTAI and its basic meaning is “to see yourself.”

Thus, Luke wrote what he discovered as he dug into these things! And as Luke compiled this information He sent it back to Theophilus, whose name means “*lover of God*” and was possibly the slave owner of Luke at one time as Luke was a slave physician, as I have said.

And the reason he wrote these things down is so Theophilus would know, understand with certainty these things about the Lord and now we too can glean these things as we are able to read this letter that Luke sent to Theophilus.

And in verse 2 where Luke says that the Word of God was “**delivered . . . to us**” he is including himself as a believer.

And I like what verse 4 says, the reason for this letter, “**that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.**” I think that is true as we dig through the Word of God. As we read, as we study the Holy Spirit makes these things certain, He makes these things real in our lives. You see, the Bible is not just a novel, a book, it is living, it is powerful, it is the Word of God that works in our lives and through our lives as we submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit!

VERSES 5-7

Luke starts out by giving to us the timeframe of these events, it was “**in the days of Herod, the king of Judea.**” The timeframe here was during Herod the Great’s reign, who ruled from 37 B. C. to 4 B. C., he was a Idumean or a descendant of Esau. In other words, very dark days. God had been silent for some 400 years. Herod was a brutal leader. There was not much hope, not much light and thus, a very depressing period of time for the Jewish people!

So we have the timeframe and now Luke gives to us the people who are in this story, a godly couple, both from the lineage of Aaron, the priestly lineage. And this godly couple had no children, which, in that culture was thought of as a curse. And now, at this point in their lives, well advanced in years, it was hard to imagine they would be blessed with children but that did not stop them from serving the Lord, and as we will see, praying for a child even in their advanced years!

And as we read on look at how God is orchestrating the events that are taking place here. I think that is important for us to understand. We tend to look at our lives and wonder if God is working and we need to understand that He is. The things we are going through, the things that happen are all for His plan and purpose to come to pass. Never forget that!

One more point here before we move on. The name Zacharias means “the Lord remembers” and his wife, Elizabeth, her name means “His oath.” The Lord remembers His oath, what oath? In Psalm 89:33-37 we read, “**Nevertheless My lovingkindness I will not utterly take from him, nor allow My faithfulness to fail. My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips. Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David: His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me; It shall be established forever like the moon, even like the faithful witness in the sky.**”

I believe he is speaking of Jesus, the New Covenant, not written on stone, but upon the tablets of our hearts giving us the forgiveness of sin through receiving Him! And God who was silent for some 400 years is going to speak and this time, through His Son, Jesus, the Savior of the world! And as you look at the names of this godly family, you see God's promise and in Jesus the promise fulfilled!

VERSES 8-10

Did you see that, he was picked by lot to serve in the Temple, what an honor! You see, the priests were divided up into 24 groups who would serve in the Temple twice a year for 1 week, according to what was set forth in I Chronicles 24:7-18.

For Zacharias, he was in charge of offering the Incense this time, probably the only time in his life he would do this, this lot fell to him. The incense was offered up on the altar of incense which was located just outside the veil of the Most Holy Place, it was in the center of the curtain in the Holy Place with the Table of Showbread to the right and the 7-branch Oil Burning Lamp was to the left.

This was the daily routine. Hundreds of worshippers gathered at the Temple before dawn and then the morning sacrifice began. It started with the incense priest walking toward the Temple, through the outer courts, and as he walked he struck a gong-like instrument known as the *Magrephah*. When this sounded, the Levites assembled and got ready to lead the people in songs of worship to God!

The other two priests that were chosen by lot walked alongside the priest who was to offer the incense. And they all entered the Holy Place together. One of the priests would set burning coals on the golden altar. The other priest arranged the incense so it was ready to go. And then these two priests left the Temple and it was just the incense priest who was left in the Holy Place now.

When the crowds of people saw these two priests exit the Temple, they knew it was now time for the incense to be offered before God. These people would bow or kneel before the Lord and spread their hands out in silent prayer.

And keep in mind, Zacharias is alone before God, offering the incense, the prayers of the people. And notice what happens next as Zacharias is before God in prayer.

VERSES 11-17

Some like to dismiss this and they don't believe that Zacharias and Elizabeth were praying for a child. But when you read what is said in verse 13, I think it is very clear, even in their advanced years they were still praying that God would give them a child.

How long were these prayers offered up to God, we don't know but look at the faith of this couple. They continued to pray for a child and now the answer to their prayer, something I don't think they were expecting, is going to come to pass.

As Zacharias is offering up incense and praying an Angel appears to him and as you would expect, fear came upon Zacharias. But this angel brings words of comfort and then tells him that his prayer is going to be answered, they will have a son and his name will be called John, which means "the favor or grace of Yahweh" or "God has been gracious." And this couple will be filled with great joy, as you would expect.

Also, this son is going to be special. *He is going to be great in the sight of the Lord. He will not drink wine or strong drink*, which is probably a reference to the vow of a Nazirite found in Numbers 6. Their son John would be specially consecrated to God all the days of his life. *He will turn the hearts of the people back to the Lord*, which tells me that they were moving away from the Lord. And lastly, *this child will come in the spirit and power of Elijah*, he will prepare the people to meet the Lord, the Messiah!

It is a partial fulfilment of what we are told in Malachi 3:1, **“Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,’ Says the Lord of hosts.”**

And in Malachi 4:5-6, at the close of this book, we are told, **“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”**

John was a type of Elijah and John will prepare the way for Jesus in His First Coming just as Elijah will prepare the way for Jesus in His Second Coming. It is as G. Coleman Luck said of John. He wrote, “His preaching would turn the hearts of careless parents to a real spiritual concern for their children. Also, he would bring back the hearts of disobedient, rebellious children to the ‘wisdom of the just.’”

You see, he is to prepare the people to meet their Lord! So here it is, God is coming and John is a herald or forerunner to the Messiah. You see, this favor or grace that was extended to Zacharias extended also to all the people of this world!

VERSES 18-20

He may of spoke of himself as an old man but he was wise in not calling his wife an old lady, just well advanced in years!

But Zacharias was unwise when he doubted God's Word. Because of that he was going to be speechless, a mute, until this promise comes to pass. For nine month's no words would come from the mouth of Zacharias, not sure how Elizabeth felt about that, but can you imagine.

And notice the question, the doubt he brings before this angel, Gabriel. He basically says, "I hear what you are saying and that is great but really, I am very old, my wife, not a spring chicken anymore. What kind of sign will you give me to show that this will come to pass?"

And notice what was said by this angel, "**... I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings.**" This was not a message that was thought up in the mind of Gabriel, this is from the Lord Himself as Gabriel came from the very presence of God! And thus, doubting Gabriel was basically doubting God Himself!

And now, for nine months, as I have said, he will be mute, unable to speak until John is born! Let me say this, whenever we doubt God's Word, His promises, we too will lose our testimony and our song, in a sense we too will be mute! But as soon as our faith is restored, so too will be our testimony and our song, our praise and witness!

And notice in verse 20, these words "**... will be fulfilled in their own time.**" How important that is for us to understand. God has a plan, His purposes will be fulfilled and we need to rest in His promises to us, not trying to figure it out or think, "Hey, I am too old to do anything!" Think about this man, in his advanced years, old age he is taking John to pre-school! God is able to do the impossible, never forget that and never doubt it!

One more point here and think this through.

If there is no Zacharias, there is no John the Baptist. If there is no John the Baptist, there is no herald announcing the coming of the Messiah. If there is no herald announcing the coming of the Messiah, the prophecies in the Old Testament regarding the Messiah are unfulfilled. If any of the prophecies of the Old Testament regarding the first coming of the Messiah are unfulfilled, then Jesus did not fulfill all things. If Jesus did not fulfill all things, then He did not complete God's plan of redemption for you and I and we must perish in our sins! This *was* good news!

- David Guzik

VERSES 21-23

So the people were waiting, and waiting for him to come out of the Temple and nothing. You see, the custom was for the priest to come from the Temple as soon as he was finished praying. The reason being is that it would assure the people that he was not struck dead by God for some sin in his life. But no Zacharias and the people are getting nervous!

Now when he finally came out, he could not speak and the people thought maybe he saw some vision. And with some hand gestures he tried to let the people know what happened but the reality is, I doubt many figured it out.

What was supposed to happen was that the priest who offered this incense before the Lord and prayers before the Lord was to come out of the holy place through the great doors of the Temple and he met up with the other two priests. He then would raise his hands and bless the people with the blessing found in Numbers 6:24-26, "**The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.**"

And then the people would respond back by saying, “*Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting.*” And then worship would begin.

But again, Zacharias was not able to speak and we are not told if someone else did that for him or what. I tend to believe nothing was said but in nine months, he is going to be able to speak again.

And as soon as his service was done in the Temple, he and his wife went home.

VERSES 24-25

What joy this must have brought to this couple and yet, for Zacharias, he still couldn't speak. Now why did Elizabeth hide herself for those five months? I think we get the answer in verse 25 as she said, “**Thus, the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.**” I think she got away to praise and thank God for the blessing of this child who was to be born in a few months!

VERSES 26-27

The angel Gabriel's work is not done. Now, sixth months into Elizabeth's pregnancy we see the angel Gabriel go to Nazareth, a city of Galilee and has an announcement for this young girl, Mary, who is betrothed to Joseph.

Please understand that at this point Mary and Joseph were betrothed to each other, in a legal sense they were married, but their marriage was not consummated at this point, they were not living together yet. And this betrothal period could last a year.

And when a couple was betrothed, they were under the obligations of faithfulness, and a divorce was required to break the betrothal. This was not a casual promise.

So Mary is a virgin, and in spite of what some may say, it means that Mary and Joseph did not have sexual relations yet.

Also, “The name ‘Mary’ is the Greek form of the Hebrew name *Miriam*, the sister of Moses. It means ‘exalted one,’ a fitting description of the soon-to-be mother of the Messiah.”

(Pate)

VERSES 28-29

So as Gabriel appears before Mary he tells Mary that she is “**highly favored**” or in the Greek CHARITOO which comes from the basic Greek word CHARIS or grace. God gave to Mary unmerited favor or grace and through her God’s grace was extended to all men by Jesus Christ. God also bestows that grace or that we are “**highly favored**” on us, on believers. We read in Ephesians 1:6, “**to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.**”

And please understand that God did not give grace to Mary for her to give to others as the Roman Catholic church tries to tell us. As we will see, Mary understood that she was a sinner separated from God and in need of a Savior just as we are!

The angel Gabriel also says to Mary that “**the Lord is with you**” The same is true for us, for believers. We are told in Matthew 28:20, “**... ‘and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’...**”

And lastly, Gabriel also calls her blessed which speaks of God acting for her good and giving to her what she needed, not necessarily what she wanted. We too are blessed as Paul reminds us in Ephesians 1:3, “**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.**”

And in seeing Gabriel, in hearing what he had to say, she was fearful. Mary was a nobody you might say and now this angel is telling here that God has highly favored her, that God is with her, that God has blessed her, it was more than she could handle. I just think seeing an angel would blow me a way!

VERSES 30-33

I love the comfort that comes from God through this angel Gabriel. **“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.”** That is our God, a God of all comfort!

And can you imagine all this spoken to this young girl, maybe only 15 years old, and she is told that she will bring forth a child and his name will be Jesus or Yahweh is Salvation? This is the one they were waiting for, the young Jewish women prayed they would be the one to bring Him forth, the Son of God, the Messiah! And now Mary was going to be that vessel!

This is the one who will rule and reign from the throne of David in Jerusalem with an everlasting Kingdom. Now some of you may be thinking that it doesn't say He was the Son of God or equal with God. Please understand that the phrase **“Son of the Highest”** is speaking of the Son of the Father and in Semitic thought, a son was a carbon copy of his father, putting Jesus on an equal par with God the Father!

And as Gabriel was speaking forth these words, Mary is wondering how in the world is this going to happen? Look at what she says and then what Gabriel tells her!

VERSES 34-37

Keep in mind that Mary wasn't doubting what God could do like Zacharias did. But she wanted to know how this could be since she didn't know a man sexually, she was a virgin. And the angel tells her that this child will be born of God. You see, the incarnation was accomplished by this creative act of the Holy Spirit in the body of Mary. Thus, Jesus would be born of the flesh without a sin nature!

Gabriel tells Mary that "**the power of the Highest will overshadow you**" and that word, "**overshadow**" means, "to cover with a cloud." The picture here is that of the Shekinah glory or the presence of God. (Exodus 16:10, 19:9, 24:16, 34:5, 40:34)

The key here is this, "**for with God nothing will be impossible**" and it is literally saying, "**For not impossible will be every word with God.**"

Let me ask you this. Do you believe that even though the situation you are going through may be impossible? You should. God can take the impossible and make it very possible! And when God tells you He is going to do the impossible, trust in Him and accept His Word, then watch and see what He will do!

VERSE 38

Lord, may I be obedient to your Word as Mary was! Wow, that is faith. Did she fully understand everything that was going to happen to her because of this? Not at all but she trusted what the Lord was saying through Gabriel and she submitted to her lot in life. Mary trusted the Word of God even though what was told seemed impossible from a human standpoint. Being a virgin she will conceive a child! And that is exactly what took place, God's Word came to pass!

VERSES 39-41

It could be at this point that Mary told Joseph what took place, and the angel visited Joseph, also confirming what Mary told him, and Joseph sent Mary away to visit her relative Elizabeth until things cooled down. You see, a woman pregnant outside of a marriage relationship would be put to death, it was a capital crime! So that is one possibility of why Mary went to visit Elizabeth.

And this was not just a short trip. Mary traveled a considerable distance, somewhere between 80 and 100 miles to get from Nazareth in the region of Galilee to the hill country of Judah to see Elizabeth and stay with her for a while.

And I love what happens when Elizabeth heard Mary's voice. We are told that the child in Elisabeth's womb, John, leaped for joy. Isn't that amazing how a piece of protoplasm, a blob of cells and tissue can hear and respond in the womb - John did!

Okay, a little sarcasm there. I truly believe life begins at conception and to destroy that life in the womb is murder! I don't care what people say when life begins, I care what God has to say, and I believe the Scriptures teach that life begins at conception!

In Psalm 139:13-16 we are told, **“For You formed my inward parts; you covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them.”**

I think that is pretty clear and people know this today, they just chose to suppress that truth so that they do not feel guilty about what they have done or what they support. But before God, it is still murder and you are still accountable!

VERSES 42-45

We see here that Elizabeth blesses Mary and speaks of the blessings that will come from the fruit of her womb, the blessings that her child will bring. How did she know? I think the Lord gave her those words to say. It was not just something she felt, it was something she knew!

Also, this word, “**blessed**” in verse 45 is MAKARIOS, (mak-ar’-ee-os) in the Greek and it speaks of being fully satisfied.

Think about this for a minute. Why are so many people unsatisfied today? Because true satisfaction is only found in Christ! And here in Luke that blessedness is linked to believing and I feel that is true today - trusting in the Lord and His Word brings blessings in our lives!

As we continue on here in Luke chapter 1 we are going to move into a section that has been called “*The Magnificat*” or the Song of Mary.

VERSES 46-56

Make no mistake about this, Mary’s praise unto God is beautiful and it starts out with magnifying the Lord and understanding her position, that she was a sinner in need of a Savior.

Mary sang, “**And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.**”

Now for many, that is a hard concept to believe because their church speaks of Mary being without sin. I grew up in the Roman Catholic Church and I understood this doctrine that they try to say is true, and because the Pope is infallible, they have elevated Mary to a position of sinlessness, she is said to have an immaculate conception like Jesus, born without sin, that she didn't die but was taken up into heaven - the Assumption and now the talk is that she is Co-redeemer or Co-redemptrix!

Listen to what one Catholic website had to say about Mary. We are told,

It was Mary's closeness to Christ that made her receive God's "fullness of grace" to be sinless. Without God's grace, it would have been impossible for Mary to be sinless, and she too would be like the rest of humanity. However, because of her decision to say, "yes" in giving birth to Christ, she was given a special privilege by having no sin touch her. Catholics believe that God wanted a perfectly pure woman to carry His Son, the God of the universe, for nothing else short of perfection would do.

Pope Pius IX officially defined the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception in the year 1854. He did so with the understanding that this belief would help the Catholic faithful grow spiritually towards Christ. The belief that Mary was without sin was not "invented" as numerous people mistakenly think. Many are still under the false impression that the Immaculate Conception was not believed until the year 1854 when it was defined. What they fail to realize is that the belief itself has extremely strong roots in Church writings going well back into the 4th century.

"Every personal sin must be excluded from the Blessed Virgin Mary for the sake of the honor of God." - St. Augustine, 390 AD. [Not someone you would want to use to justify your position]

Make no mistake about it, Mary has been exalted to a position of co-savior, mediatrix's of all grace. In fact, in my files at home I have a picture from a Catholic church in Quito, Ecuador that has Mary hanging on the cross. And what that tells me is they believe Mary also paid the penalty for our sins!

Some may argue that we don't do that here in America, but I must disagree. In fact, in a Catholic church here in Manitowoc, Wisconsin there was a statue of Mary stepping on the head of a serpent, of Satan, crushing him, instead of Jesus crushing Satan's power by dying on the cross of Calvary paying the penalty for our sins and rising from the dead on the third day, now Mary has been elevated to that position! Totally missing the point of Genesis 3.

And just for one verse to show you it is only Jesus, not Mary or anyone else, listen to what Paul said in I Timothy 2:5-6, **“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”**

Also, the Catholic Catechism teaches that Mary never sinned. It says, “By the grace of God Mary remained free of every personal sin her whole life long.” (CCC493).

And yet, the Bible tells us in Romans 3:23, **“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”** Okay, not just one verse.

Also, Psalm 53:3 says, **“But all have turned their backs on him; they are filthy with sin-- corrupt and rotten through and through. Not one is good, not one!”** (TLB). Mary is not excluded from that, *ALL* means *ALL*!

One writer summed it up like this in regards to what Mary spoke here in Luke, “Mary answered the Roman Catholic dogma of the immaculate conception, which holds that from the moment of her conception Mary was by God's grace ‘kept free from all taint of Original Sin.’ Only sinners need a Savior.” (Liefeld)

And Morgan wrote, “Mary was a member of the sinning race . . . but the honour conferred on her was of the highest, and our thoughts of her, our language concerning her, should at least not lack the dignity and respect manifested in the word of Gabriel. Hers was the crown and glory of all Motherhood, and we should ever think and speak of her reverently.”

Then how can the Roman Catholic Church come to these conclusions about Mary? This can only happen when the words of man are held higher than the Word of God for Mary herself is rejoicing in God ***HER SAVIOR*** as well as our Savior!

Mary was born of the flesh, had a sin nature, and she, like all of us, needed Jesus and she recognized that fact! It is too bad the Catholic church misses the mark on that one for I believe the Scriptures are very clear on this one.

Another point I would like to bring out here and that is in this song we see Mary quote out of the Old Testament some 15 times. That tells me Mary knew the Scriptures! That also tells me that Jesus was brought up in a home by parents who loved and knew the Scriptures.

What a great lesson for us to follow, for our children will be affected by what we put in them, what we do and what we say, either for good or for bad! How are you applying God’s Word in your life, your kids are watching!

So we see Mary lift up the Lord, recognize her sinful condition, humbled herself before the Lord, and recognized that what God was doing in her and through her would bless others and they will call her blessed!

It is the Lord who has done these great things and He alone is holy! He pours out His mercy on the humble and his wrath upon the proud! He fills the hungry and those who are rich in the things in this world and are not hungry for God, they are empty! And the promises He has made to His people, the Jews will come to pass. A beautiful song of Mary praising God!

Now in verse 56 we see that Mary remained with Elizabeth about three months and thus, it is possible that Mary stayed with Elizabeth until John was born and then went to ***HER HOME***.

VERSES 57-66

As word spread of Elizabeth's pregnancy and birth there was great rejoicing! That should be the case in the church today - but we don't always see that because of jealousy and-so-on.

Paul, in I Corinthians 12:26-27 gives us the correct perspective we should have. He said **“And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.”**

What happens when these things take place? The body functions in a healthy and beneficial way, it is beautiful. On the other hand, when things don't, the body is spastic and self-defeating, it is ugly. May we respond in ways to build up the body of Christ and not tear it down!

Now let me also say this, if a boy was born, there was great rejoicing. But if a girl, not so much. William Barclay explains it like this. He wrote, “When the time of the birth was near at hand, friends and local musicians gathered near the house. When the birth was announced and it was a boy, the musicians broke into song, and there was universal congratulation and rejoicing. If it was a girl, the musicians went silently and regretfully away!” Not very nice.

Now traditionally they would name the baby boy on the eighth day, at the time of his circumcision and he would be named after his father or some other relative. But Elizabeth told the people he shall be named John, which puzzled them because they knew of no John in the family!

And we are told in verse 62, **“So they made signs to his father – what he would have him called.”** I find that funny because Zacharias was not deaf, he just couldn’t speak. I wonder what he was thinking as they are making all these signs to him!

Finally, Zacharias began to write down the name John also and then God open his mouth and he could speak once again, and he began to praise God. His faith was restored and so was his witness and testimony!

Again, keep in mind that God gave this barren couple in their advanced years a child and they name him John, or “the favor or grace of Yahweh” or “God has been gracious.” God truly gives to each of us things we don’t deserve!

Keep in mind that for nine months Zacharias could not talk and you would think that the first words out of his mouth would be, “God, what in the world were you doing! I couldn’t speak for nine months. What is up with that?” But not Zacharias, his first words were praise to God.

May we learn the lesson, that no matter what we go through, no matter how difficult it may be, praise flows from our lives, praise unto our God!

And notice what happens next, **“Then fear came on all who dwelt around them; and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea. 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.”** Luke 1:65-66.

Make no mistake about it, as you speak forth the Words of God, as you praise the Lord in the various situations you are going through, people will take notice, they will start talking and that is what we see here. The people were wondering what kind of child will this John be? And they would find out down the road as he comes preparing the people to meet their Messiah!

VERSES 67-80

I find it interesting that all the people in this chapter are said to be filled with or empowered by the Holy Spirit. John in Luke 1:15, Mary in Luke 1:35, Elizabeth in Luke 1:41, and here we see Zacharias in Luke 1:67.

That is one of the problems today, people have the right information but they don't have the power to run those tools they have, which is the Holy Spirit, that is where the power is at.

If you are lacking that power in your life, in your walk, just ask God to fill you, overflow you with power to be a witness of Him and He will give it to you! It is out of this empowerment that Zacharias speaks forth the Words of God in verses 68-79.

And notice what the focus is first, he is speaking of the Messiah, Jesus. We see that Jesus is *the horn of salvation for us* – Luke 1:69. From the lineage of David God would send a Savior, Jesus Christ to set His people free! What a glorious promise that has come to pass for us!

Jesus *saves us from our enemies* – Luke 1:71. It is as we are told in Isaiah 54:17, “**No weapon formed against you shall prosper, And every tongue which rises against you in judgment You shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, And their righteousness is from Me, Says the Lord.**”

Jesus is the One who will *perform the mercy promised to our fathers* – Luke 1:72. God will not go back on His Word or forget a promise. In Numbers 23:19 we are told, “**God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?**” Jesus came the first time with forgiveness in His arms to extend to us the forgiveness of sin as He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. He is coming again to put down the rebellion as the Lion from the tribe of Judah, to destroy our enemies, and to rule and reign in Jerusalem as we serve Him.

Jesus is the One *to remember His holy covenant* – Luke 1:72. His covenant that He made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will come to pass!

And Jesus is able to have us *serve Him without fear* – Luke 1:74. We don't need to fear the Lord because we are now children of God, we have been adopted into the family of God and thus, we do not need to serve Him out of fear but out of love!

It is as Morgan tells us, "It was a song of salvation, and has within it truth deeper than most likely the singer then understood."

Now, in verses 76 through 79 of Luke chapter 1 we see Zacharias speak of his son, John, who will prepare the way for the Messiah, Jesus, to come.

It is as we are told in Matthew 3:1-3, **"In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!' For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight.'"**" That was John!

And John will also have a role to play in God's great plan of redemption as he will prepare the hearts of the people for the coming of the Messiah.

We see that John was *the prophet of the highest* or he was a true prophet of God – Luke 1:76. Jesus says this of John the Baptist in Matthew 11:11, **"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist . . ."**

Also, we see that John was *to go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways* – Luke 1:76. John had a unique calling by God, He was to prepare the way for the Lord to come.

He will *give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins* – Luke 1:77. He will point them to the Messiah, to Jesus!

He will *give light to those who sit in darkness* – Luke 1:79. It is the light of Jesus that will shine upon them!

And John *will guide our feet into the way of peace* – Luke 1:79. He will point us to the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ!

And then we are told, **“So the child grew and became strong in Spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel.”** Luke 1:80.

It seems that John grew up in the deserts around the Dead Sea in the Qumran Community, until he received his call to public ministry. Some would call those years in the desert a waste of time, God calls them training years for ministry.

Don't let those desert experiences discourage you, see what God is teaching you during those times, and like John, you will grow in the grace and knowledge of God ready for service when He calls you!

Next time we will see the birth of the Messiah, of Jesus and maybe into the ministry of John the Baptist. Remember how God's plans and purposes will come to pass even in the darkest of days!