

Introduction: Luke associated with the fact that God became a man. The doctor perspective.

THEME: *The purpose of the gospel; Gabriel appears to Zacharias and announces the birth of John; Gabriel appears to Mary and announces the virgin birth of Jesus; Mary visits Elisabeth; birth of John.*

Luke 1:1-4 NLT *Many people have set out to write accounts about the events that have been fulfilled among us. They used the eyewitness reports circulating among us from the early disciples. Having carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I also have decided to write an accurate account for you, most honorable Theophilus, so you can be certain of the truth of everything you were taught.*

Two words are important in this passage and should not be passed over. “Eyewitness” is the Greek word **autoptai**—**auto** meaning “that which is of itself,” and **opsomai** meaning “to see.” “To see for yourself” would be an eyewitness. It is a medical term which means to make an autopsy. In fact, what Dr. Luke is trying to say is, “We are eyewitnesses who made an autopsy, and I am writing to you about what we found.”

The second important word Dr. Luke uses is *ministers*, which is the Greek **huperatai**, meaning “an under-rower on a boat.” In a hospital the “under-rower” is the intern. Dr. Luke is saying that all of them were just interns under the Great Physician. What Dr. Luke is telling us is that as a physician and a scholar, he made an autopsy of the records of those who had been eyewitnesses.

Luk 1:5-10 *When Herod was king of Judea, there was a Jewish priest named Zechariah. He was a member of the priestly order of Abijah, and his wife, Elizabeth, was also from the priestly line of Aaron. Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous in God’s eyes, careful to obey all of the Lord’s commandments and regulations. They had no children because Elizabeth was unable to conceive, and they were both very old. One day Zechariah was serving God in the Temple, for his order was on duty that week. As was the custom of the priests, he was chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense. While the incense was being burned, a great crowd stood outside, praying.*

John's parents were Zacharias and Elisabeth. *Zacharias* means “God remembers,” and *Elisabeth* means “His oath.” Together their names mean, “God remembers His oath.” Here was an old couple who did not have a child. To be childless was practically a disgrace for a Hebrew woman, and Elisabeth had no children. Yet, they were righteous, and Zacharias, belonging to the tribe of Levi, served in the temple.

Luk 1:11-17 *While Zechariah was in the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the incense altar. Zechariah was shaken and overwhelmed with fear when he saw him. But the angel said, “Don’t be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John. You will have*

great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord. He must never touch wine or other alcoholic drinks. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth. And he will turn many Israelites to the Lord their God. He will be a man with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and he will cause those who are rebellious to accept the wisdom of the godly.”

Zechariah getting selected to burn the incense was like winning the lottery. He also had something he and Elizabeth had been praying about for a long time (a baby). Have you ever been there praying a long time and you think your not being heard? Well, he gets a dramatic answer letting us all know God can do all things! He was set apart holy with a Nazarine vow. Let us understand clearly that although John the Baptist went forth in the spirit and power of Elijah, he was not Elijah. John would turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.

Luke 1:18-20 Zechariah said to the angel, “How can I be sure this will happen? I’m an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years.” Then the angel said, “I am Gabriel! I stand in the very presence of God. It was he who sent me to bring you this good news! But now, since you didn’t believe what I said, you will be silent and unable to speak until the child is born. For my words will certainly be fulfilled at the proper time.”

Have you ever prayed like that? You ask God for something, but you really do not believe He is going to give it to you. This is one reason we do not receive answers to our prayers. We have no faith at all. This man Zacharias is quite human, and I cannot help but laugh at him because that's the way I pray sometimes.

Luke 1:21-25 Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah to come out of the sanctuary, wondering why he was taking so long. When he finally did come out, he couldn’t speak to them. Then they realized from his gestures and his silence that he must have seen a vision in the sanctuary. When Zechariah’s week of service in the Temple was over, he returned home. Soon afterward his wife, Elizabeth, became pregnant and went into seclusion for five months. “How kind the Lord is!” she exclaimed. “He has taken away my disgrace of having no children.”

This passage also strikes me as being funny. God, after 400 years of silence, once again breaks through to the human race, but the very man that He communicates with does not believe Him. And now he is made dumb. Can you imagine his trying to explain to the people that he is dumb? How would you make known to people that you had seen an angel and could not talk? It would not be easy. Think about the gyrations Zacharias must have used trying to make known his predicament. It must have been comical.

Luk 1:26-34 In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. Gabriel appeared to her and said, “Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!” Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. “Don’t be afraid, Mary,” the angel told her, “for you have found favor with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him

Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!" Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin."

Notice: Scripture is clear. The word Virgin is mentioned twice this a clear biblical point.

There is a tendency among Protestants to play down the role of Mary, but this verse tells us that she was highly favored. In the same breath, however, let me say that she was blessed among women, not above women. She is not lifted above women; she lifted up womanhood. This is the role she played. It is so easy to say that a woman brought sin into the world, but remember, it was a woman, and not a man, who brought the Savior into the world.

Luk 1:35-38 The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month. For the word of God will never fail." Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her.

No man had anything to do with the birth of Jesus Christ. We are told in the Book of Leviticus that the birth of a child caused a woman to be unclean because she brought a sinner into the world. Mary is told that she is not bringing a sinner into the world; He is holy. The union of man and woman can only produce a child with a sin nature. By the virgin birth is the only way God could get that "holy thing" into the human family. In Psa_51:5 David said, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." Mary's Son would be different. He would be virgin born.

This verse reveals Mary's submission to the will of God. She told the angel, "Be it unto me according to thy word." At that very moment a cloud came over her life, and that cloud was there until the Lord Jesus Christ came back from the dead. The resurrection of Christ proves His virgin birth. It was questioned until then. You cannot deny the virgin birth and believe the Resurrection, or vice versa. The virgin birth and the Resurrection go together; they stand or fall together.

Luk 1:39-45 A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town where Zechariah lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. At the sound of Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, "God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. Why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said."

Little is said in Scripture about Elisabeth. She sang the first song of the New Testament, and when you have a soloist like this, you should not ignore her. She is a remarkable person. She had faith while her husband Zacharias did not. He was struck dumb because of his unbelief, but Elisabeth was not. She believed God. Now she encourages Mary. Mary is a young woman and Elisabeth is an old woman. Elisabeth had walked with God for many years, and she assures her that there would be a performance of those things which had been revealed to her. I would like to give Elisabeth a little credit along with the others. She should not be deified, of course. She was only a woman, just as Mary was only a woman. And Mary needed the encouragement that Elisabeth could give.

Luk 1:46-56 Mary responded, "Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior! For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed. For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me. He shows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear him. His mighty arm has done tremendous things! He has scattered the proud and haughty ones. He has brought down princes from their thrones and exalted the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands. He has helped his servant Israel and remembered to be merciful. For he made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children forever." Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back to her own home.

Mary sings a song. This is known as the Magnificat. This song teaches us several interesting things. Mary tells us in her song that she needed a Savior and that she rejoiced in Him. Protestant friend, let us call her blessed. We don't make her a goddess and kneel before her, but we do need to call her blessed. It was her glorious privilege to be the mother of the Son of God, to bring Him into the world. We should not play it down, but we should not play it up either. She was a wonderful person, and it was no accident that she was chosen by God. It was His definite decision, and God makes no mistakes.

Luk 1:57 When it was time for Elizabeth's baby to be born, she gave birth to a son. And when her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had been very merciful to her, everyone rejoiced with her. When the baby was eight days old, they all came for the circumcision ceremony. They wanted to name him Zechariah, after his father. But Elizabeth said, "No! His name is John!" "What?" they exclaimed. "There is no one in all your family by that name." So they used gestures to ask the baby's father what he wanted to name him. He motioned for a writing tablet, and to everyone's surprise he wrote, "His name is John." Instantly Zechariah could speak again, and he began praising God. Awe fell upon the whole neighborhood, and the news of what had happened spread throughout the Judean hills. Everyone who heard about it reflected on these events and asked, "What will this child turn out to be?" For the hand of the Lord was surely upon him in a special way.

In those days a family name was usually given to a new baby. When the question of naming the baby came along, the relatives assumed he would be called Zacharias—Zacharias Jr., I guess.

Elisabeth made the correction, but they appealed to Zacharias. Since he could not speak, he wrote for them, "His name is John." He had already been named by God. Those present marveled at the name. After this, Zacharias was able to speak again, and he immediately began to sing praises to God. Although he did not have much faith, when the baby was born he could rejoice in God. Again, the lack of faith displayed by Zacharias is a quality many of us have.

Praying Big is one thing having the faith to believe God is going to answer is another issue, altogether. Where are you? Do you have enough faith to pray big and believe He will answer?

At John's birth, Zacharias, who has been dumb for about nine months, is not only able to speak, but he will sing a solo. Elisabeth sang the first song, Mary sang the second one, and now it is quite proper that Zacharias sing a song.

Luk 1:67-80 Then his father, Zechariah, was filled with the Holy Spirit and gave this prophecy: "Praise the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has visited and redeemed his people. He has sent us a mighty Savior from the royal line of his servant David, just as he promised through his holy prophets long ago. Now we will be saved from our enemies and from all who hate us. He has been merciful to our ancestors by remembering his sacred covenant— the covenant he swore with an oath to our ancestor Abraham. We have been rescued from our enemies so we can serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness for as long as we live. "And you, my little son, will be called the prophet of the Most High, because you will prepare the way for the Lord. You will tell his people how to find salvation through forgiveness of their sins. Because of God's tender mercy, the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace." John grew up and became strong in spirit. And he lived in the wilderness until he began his public ministry to Israel.

God made these promises to Abraham. Mary, Elisabeth, and Zacharias still believed that the promises made to Abraham would be fulfilled. There are some today who have given up and do not believe God will make good His promises to Abraham. Friends, if you believe God is going to make good Joh_3:16 to you, you have no right to discount the promises God made to Abraham. John was to be called a prophet of the Highest. He was to go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways. John knew that the Messiah was in their midst. John the Baptist was a very unusual person. He was prepared to do a special task for God.

Believers' Bible: Christ's coming is likened to the sunrise. For centuries, the world had lain in darkness. Now through the tender mercy of our God, dawn was about to break. It would come in the Person of Christ, shining on the Gentiles who were in darkness and the shadow of death, and guiding Israel's feet into the way of peace (see Mal_4:2). The chapter closes with a simple statement that the child grew physically and spiritually, remaining in the deserts till the day of his public appearance to the nation of Israel. **Have you ever felt like you are in the desert waiting on His appearance?**