

The Background of Luke

1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been **accomplished among us**,  
 2 just as those who from the beginning were **eyewitnesses and ministers** of the word have delivered them to us,  
 3 it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an **orderly account** for you, **most excellent** Theophilus,  
 4 that you may have **certainty** concerning the things you have been taught.

Luke's Sources	Luke's Structure	Luke's Audience
Last of the Synoptics - Mark (via Peter) - Matthew  Not an eyewitness himself  Sourced like a History - Eyewitnesses (Mary) - Jesus was a public man (Christianity is a public faith)  - Writings (John the Baptist) - Does not come out of thin air but ordinary life  Luke followed events closely enough to write the most in the New Testament (Gentile)	An Orderly Account - Chronological (History) - Jesus as Man (Divinity) - Missional (Gospel)  Formal Greek and proper grammar (corrects Mark) except in chapter 1 (Hebrew)  Luke-Acts written as chiasm - Start on the outskirts - Work toward Jerusalem - Receive Spirit in Jerusalem - Spread Gospel to world	Likely a specific person not a general greeting (the Gospel comes to individuals)  Most Excellent – title of governmental authority or prestige (not a friend)  Theophilus – “lover of God” (common name – not Christian in origin)  *he has the awefullest name in the Bible  Certainty is born out of truth (supported by evidence of historicity)

“Some religions can be indifferent to historical fact and move entirely on the plane of timeless truth. Christianity cannot. It rests upon the affirmation that a series of events happened, in which God revealed Himself in action, for the salvation of men.” C. H. Dodd

God's People in Context

5 In the days of **Herod, king of Judea**, there was a priest named **Zacharias, of the division of Abijah**; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

6 They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking **blamelessly** in all the **commandments and requirements** of the Lord.

7 But they had **no child**, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years.

**Usurpers**

Rome – Caesar Augustus

- The first Emperor of Rome
- Emperor of the World (temporal)
- Refused to call himself a king (deceitful)

Judea – Herod the Great

- A somebody (set up by Mark Antony)
- An Edomite (not a true Jew)
- A friend of Rome (loyalty - a puppet king)
- A fraud: rebuilt the temple and expanded paganism at the same time
- A suspicious power monger (killed three of his own sons to keep his power)
- “It is safer to be Herod's pig than his son” attributed to Augustus

High Priests – Annas and Caiaphas

- Usurped after the Maccabees
- In league with Rome
- Not the right family, not the right beliefs
- Sadducees, not Pharisees (religious liberals who rejected the resurrection)

\*no future hope made them sad you see

All these appear to have superior circumstances compared to God's people

**Rightful Heirs**

God – Ruler of the World (total and eternal)

The Christ – the Son of David (rightful King)

Sons of Aaron – Zacharias and Elizabeth

- Nobodies in the grand scheme of the world
- From the hill country (hinterlands)
- Rightful priests and righteous (Levites)
- Blameless (hyperbolic – none are blameless)
- Godly compared to everyone else in Judah

Three levels of law: Moral, Civil, Priestly

- Moral: laws for all the world at all time
- Civil: laws for the Israelites in their nation
- Priestly: laws for priests and family of Aaron

Barrenness – usually the opposite of blameless

- A stigma viewed as a punishment
- Beyond child-bearing age and beyond hope
- God uses to bring his glory in Old Testament (patriarchs - Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel)

Be careful of judgement of circumstances when we all deserve to be judged

Zacharias means the Lord Remembers

Elizabeth means God is an oath (faithful)

## The Posture of Penitence

8 Now it happened [that] while he was performing his **priestly service** before God in the [appointed] order of his division,  
 9 according to the custom of the priestly office, he was **chosen by lot** to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.  
 10 And **the whole multitude** of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering.

Priestly Service	Providence	Prayer
Service – everything we do should be done as to God (sweet aroma to the Lord)  Priestly – we are called to be God’s representative wherever we go/what we do  Risk of entering the temple because people had died (God judges the heart)	Man’s estimation: unlikely to be chosen (1:20,000 priests)  Many priests did not get the opportunity to serve in the temple (14 priests per year)  God’s providence: never in doubt to use Zacharias  There is no chance with God	Incense to be a sweet aroma as prayers go up (right next to holy of holies)  People outside were praying with the priest inside (we are all priests before God)  God desires us to pray because He cares for us

11 And an **angel** of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense.  
 12 Zacharias was troubled when he saw [the angel], and **fear gripped him**.  
 13 But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for **your petition has been heard**, and your wife Elizabeth will **bear you a son**, and you will give him the name John.

Fear	Petition	Promise
Fear is not an abnormal first response to God (but why are you afraid?)  Fear vs. being at ease in Zion (Amos 6:1)  God’s people can be too comfortable with God  About 365 “do not fear” phrases in the Bible (various wordings)	Not a personal petition about having a child - Probably had given up on praying for children - Would have been wildly inappropriate (selfish)  Petitioning for Israel - Not personal requests - Prayers for blessings - Freedom from oppression - Coming of Messiah - Prayer for God’s Word	Answer to corporate prayer - Make way for Messiah - Save people from captivity  Answer to personal prayer - Birth of a son (undeserved) - God uses people to fulfill His promises  Named by God, gives God special authority over life  John means Yahweh Saves

“Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, and to those who feel secure on the mountain of Samaria, the notable men of the first of the nations, to whom the house of Israel comes!”  
 Amos 6:1

Good News of Great Joy

14 "You will have joy and gladness, and **many will rejoice** at his birth.

15 "For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be **filled with the Holy Spirit** while yet in his mother's womb.

**Many will Rejoice**

Many includes family, culture, and future  
 - Blessing to Family (John and Elizabeth)  
 - Blessing to Community (Israel Repents)  
 - Blessing to Future (Salvation of the World)

Great in the service of the Lord  
 - God uses everyone who follows Him  
 - Some are used mightily (greater sacrifice)  
 - Lived under greater restrictions (Nazarite?)

**Filled with the Spirit**

No earthly greatness matters, only the greatness of God's Spirit working in us  
 - John belonged to God  
 - World's vs. God's idea of Greatness

Filled with the Spirit from the womb  
 - Value of the unborn as called people  
 - An anointed one in an Old Testament sense  
 - Supernatural power of message

16 "And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God.

17 "It is he who will go [as a forerunner] **before Him** in the spirit and power of Elijah, **TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN**, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready **a people prepared for the Lord.**"

**A Return to Righteousness**

Return God's people to righteous living  
  
 The cycle of sin – Israel (coming out of judgement)  
  
 How many things in our world turn hearts to God?  
  
 Things usually distract our hearts—our attentions—from the things of God

**A Forerunner of Christ**

Elijah – the first Old Testament prophet  
  
 There was a famine of food in Elijah's day because of the sin of the people under Ahab  
  
 Famine of the Word of the Lord leading up to John the Baptist day (Amos 8:11)  
  
 John the Baptist - the last Old Testament prophet

**Preparation for the Lord**

Turn hearts of a generation back to faith of their fathers before the Day of the Lord and Day of Judgement (Malachi 4:5-6)  
  
 Create hearts of faith not simply making lip service and bring restoration to the world  
  
 Bring people to repentance which prepares them for Messiah (attitude and action)

"Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord GOD, "when I will send a famine on the land—not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD." Amos 8:11

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction." Malachi 4:5-6

The Doubt of the Devout

18 Zacharias said to the angel, "How will I know this [for certain]? For **I am an old man** and my wife is advanced in years."

19 The angel answered and said to him, "**I am Gabriel**, who stands in the presence of God, and **I have been sent** to speak to you and to bring you this **good news**."

20 "And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because **you did not believe** my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time."

I am Old	I am Gabriel	The Danger of Unbelief
<p>Zacharias asks for a sign</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign</li> <li>- How many signs do we need? (Pharaoh and Plagues)</li> <li>- Abraham vs. Zacharias?</li> <li>- Zacharias should know better as a religious leader</li> <li>- Only God judges the heart</li> </ul> <p>I am Old – Circumstance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When we say we can't, we mean God can't</li> <li>- God is not limited like us</li> <li>- We cannot limit God to our understanding or apply our flaws to him</li> </ul>	<p>Gabriel: one of seven arch angels (Jewish tradition)</p> <p>His job is as a messenger (meaning of the word angel)</p> <p>Identity in God's eyes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Knows God's Glory</li> <li>- Apostolos: sent with authority (speak for God)</li> <li>- Euangelion: the Gospel is the Good News to us</li> </ul> <p>Do we realize who we are talking to when we make excuses or plead our case?</p>	<p>God's Word will come to pass</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is not dependent on us</li> <li>- It is not in our timing</li> </ul> <p>Unbelief in God's Word is sin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is the original sin (Adam and Eve)</li> <li>- It robs God of His Lordship</li> <li>- To disbelieve is to embrace God's judgement (rebellion)</li> </ul> <p>Muteness as a punishment (restraint from speaking more unbelief – grace of God)</p> <p>Muteness also functions as a sign that God's Word is true</p>

Walk out your Calling

21 The people were **waiting for Zacharias**, and were wondering at his delay in the temple.

22 But when he came out, he was unable to speak to them; and they realized that **he had seen a vision** in the temple; and he kept making signs to them, and remained mute.

23 When the days of his priestly service were ended, **he went back home**.

Waiting	Vision	Home
<p>A Dangerous Job</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Priests had died before</li> <li>- Needed a proper attitude</li> </ul> <p>Waiting for Confirmation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Their prayers were heard</li> <li>- Awaiting the Messiah</li> </ul>	<p>Visions of Vocation – Garber</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- God calls us with a vision</li> <li>- What will you do with what you know?</li> </ul> <p>God gives us thorns in the flesh (to enhance our faith and keep us humble)</p>	<p>He completed his service despite his impediment</p> <p>He went home to his regular calling and family</p> <p>God calls us to His extraordinary in our ordinary</p>

24 After these days Elizabeth his wife became pregnant, and **she kept herself in seclusion** for five months, saying,  
 25 "This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked [with favor] upon [me], **to take away my disgrace** among men."

Seclusion	Disgrace
Not hiding for fear or uncertainty  Concealing until the proper time - Avoids irreverence from unbelievers - Avoids sensationalism or familiarity	Disgrace/Reproach – oneidos  Associated with barrenness and unfaithfulness  Christ bore our reproach on the cross - We deserve the reproach, He did not

The Call to Believe		
God's Word is True	Called to Believe	Called to Serve
God's Word comes to pass - He promises consequences for sin (Israel's Idolatry)  - He promises redemption of His people (Messiah)  - He promises judgement on the usurpers of this world  - He promises the coming of His kingdom (circumstances)  Luke promises the facts yet those facts are supernatural  Consider the source before you react with unbelief	God gives us faith to believe - We cannot conjure belief of our own volition (sinners)  - Our righteousness is but filthy rags (God blesses us)  - Abraham's faith counted as righteousness (that of Christ)  - Belief vs. Doubt: Trust in spite of circumstances (faith)  - God has mercy when we deserve judgement but sometimes we get justice  Faith is rational because God is trustworthy – it is no leap	God calls us to serve - God gives each person gifts for a specific calling  - God uses each of His people differently (John the Baptist)  - We need to obey when God calls us to act (no hesitation)  Our obedience is the outward display of inward trust and belief in God's Word  Personal prayers may not be answered as we want but prayers for God's will are always be answered