

## That You May Know The Certainty

# LESSON 1: THE ANNOUNCEMENTS CONCERNING JOHN AND JESUS (LUKE 1:1-38)

The third gospel record in the canon of Scripture bears the name of “Luke,” likely a Gentile who had become a Christian (Colossians 4:10-14), a physician (Colossians 4:14), and a travel companion to the apostle Paul (2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 1:24). It is clear that the same author wrote both Luke and Acts (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-3) and was a companion to Paul (notice the “we” and “us” references in Acts, Acts 16:10; 28:16). Process of elimination of those known to have traveled with Paul leaves Luke as the likely author of both books. It appears to have been written in the middle part of the first century (perhaps around 58-63 A.D.). The theme of the book may be identified from Luke 1:3-4 as: “That you may know the certainty.”

### A COMPILED NARRATIVE (LUKE 1:1-4)

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**1:1-4.** There were several written accounts concerning the events of Jesus’s life when Luke wrote (perhaps including Matthew and Mark). There was also direct eyewitness testimony from servants of God’s word among them (perhaps Jesus’s mother, brothers, apostles, etc.). Luke’s gospel record was written, therefore, to provide a carefully studied and researched, inspired account of Jesus’s life. Initially, this was written to a man named Theophilus (identity unknown, though, apparently, a person of some rank; Acts 1:1). Luke’s gospel amounts to an orderly sequence (perhaps largely in chronological order). This record was initially given to Theophilus so that he could know the exact truth about Jesus and what had transpired. Likewise, this continues to help people today have confidence in the events of Jesus’s time on earth!

### JOHN’S BIRTH FORETOLD (LUKE 1:5-25)

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**1:5-7.** During the time King Herod ruled over Judea (37 B.C. to 4 A.D.), there was a man named Zechariah. He was a priest from Abijah’s division of priests (24 divisions took turns serving at the temple twice per

year, 1 Chronicles 24:7-19) and had a wife named Elizabeth (a descendant of Aaron). They lived righteously and obediently before God. However, they had not been able to have any children and were now both well along in years.

**1:8-17.** When Zechariah’s priestly division was serving, he was chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary of the temple (this opportunity may have only come once in a priest’s life, if at all). He entered the temple sanctuary in the holy place at the hour of incense (to be burned twice per day, Exodus 30:7-8). The angel Gabriel (vv. 19, 26; Daniel 8:16; 9:21) appeared to Zechariah at the right of the altar of incense. Although Zechariah was fearful, Gabriel told Zechariah that his prayer had been heard and Elizabeth would have a son, who was to be named John. This son would result in joy and delight for many (God had promised to send Elijah before the Messiah, Malachi 4:5)! He would be great in God’s sight and was to be devoted to God throughout his life, not just for a time (to abstain from wine and strong drink/beer; Leviticus 10:9). He would be guided by the Holy Spirit throughout His life. The results of his work would be that many of the Israelites would be turned to God through his message of repentance and preparation for the Messianic kingdom (Matthew 3:1). The spirit and power of Elijah would be in him (Malachi 4:5-6). Through his work, the people would have their hearts turned and made ready for the Lord!

**1:18-25.** Zechariah doubted and asked how he could know this would happen since he and his wife were old. Gabriel assured him that he stands in the presence of God and was sent to tell this good news. Due to Zechariah’s doubt, he would be unable to speak until these things were fulfilled. Meanwhile, the people who gathered outside wondered what was taking Zechariah so long, but realized he had seen a vision when he came out and could not speak. After his time of service was completed, he went back home and his wife conceived. She kept herself in seclusion for five months. She recognized her child as a favorable gift from God that would take away her disgrace of barrenness (1 Samuel 1:6).

### JESUS’S BIRTH FORETOLD (LUKE 1:26-38)

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**1:26-33.** In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, Gabriel was sent by God to Mary (compare with the visit to Joseph, Matthew 1:18-25). She was in a Galilean town called Nazareth and was engaged (betrothed) to a descendant of David named Joseph. She was a virgin. Gabriel greeted her by saying that she was a favored woman by the Lord. Mary, however, was troubled/perplexed and did not understand this greeting. Then, Gabriel told Mary that she had found favor with God and that she would conceive and give birth to a Son, who would be named Jesus (“Jehovah is salvation”; equivalent of Yeshua/Joshua). Concerning this Son, Gabriel told Mary that He would be great (as the Messiah, Isaiah 61:1-3), called the Son of the Most High (Psalm 2:7), be given the throne of His father David (2 Samuel 7:12-13), and reign over the house of Jacob forever in a kingdom with no end (Daniel 2:44).

**1:34-38.** Mary asked how this could happen since she had not had sexual relations with a man. Gabriel responded that Jesus’s body would not be formed through the normal means, but would be the result of the Holy Spirit in the direct power of God so that the One born to her would be called the Son of God (according to prophecy, Isaiah 7:14). Gabriel then presented Mary’s relative (unknown relationship), Elizabeth, as proof of God being able to do miraculous things. Elizabeth, who was called “childless,” was now in her sixth month. In fact, nothing is impossible with God (Genesis 18:14; Luke 18:27)! Mary’s response was one of faith and submissiveness to be used as the vessel to bring Jesus into the world! Then, Gabriel left her.

## CONCLUSION

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The Jewish people had been waiting for hundreds of years for the Messiah (the Anointed One) who would be King over an everlasting kingdom. Now, during this difficult time under Roman rule, God had announced the births of both the Elijah of Old Testament prophecy (John) and the Messiah (Jesus)! God was preparing to do special things through these!

## DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

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What are some basic facts about the gospel of Luke?

What is the main purpose of Luke’s gospel record?

How are Zechariah and Elizabeth described?

What did Gabriel reveal to Zechariah?

How did God keep His promise to Zechariah and Elizabeth?

How would Mary be favored by the Lord?

What did Gabriel tell Mary about the Son she would conceive?

How did Mary respond to the news that she would conceive?