

Planned

Dec. 6, 2020

Luke 1:11-25

This quarter we study the third gospel, the book of Luke. While not named in the gospel, the beloved physician, Luke, is generally accepted as the author. The gospel was written circa AD 60, possibly in Caesarea during Paul's two-year imprisonment. Luke wrote this gospel after careful research and first-person interviews. He addressed it to a man named Theophilus (which means 'lover of God').



Zechariah's Story

Throughout Scriptures we see that there are no accidents but rather, God has a plan. Luke begins with two promises of hope that generations had been waiting for. The first promise is in today's Scripture reading and it came in response to Isaiah 40:3-5: "... *Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; Make straight in the desert a highway for our God...*" We see in Luke 1:17 that this child of promise will be a "forerunner before Him..." and John the Baptist was the fulfillment of these prophecies. John was "planned" (promised) from the very beginning. It is God's plan.

When you read the promises of God, do you ever believe them for others but not yourself? Promises such as "*I know the plans I have for you*" and that He will "*work all things to the good of those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*" There are many wonderful promises for believers but as we experience life, we may doubt those promises. In our Scripture today, even Zechariah doubted the news the angel brought to him. [excerpts from Russ Wilkins]

Prayer Answered (Luke 1:11-17)

- Zechariah is from the lineage of Aaron, Moses' brother. Aaron's descendants were priests.
 - Zechariah was chosen by lot to burn incense in the temple on this particular day.
 - **"Then an angel of the Lord appeared"** – In the Holy of Holies, Zechariah was performing his priestly duties alone. The angel Gabriel spoke to him **"Fear not Zacharias, thy prayer is heard."**
 - Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth were faithful to God, but they were childless into old age.
 - After all these years of apparent silence from heaven, God was ready to respond.
 - The angel gives details of God's plan to answer Zechariah's prayers.
 - Elizabeth would bear a son. By natural relations with Zechariah, she would conceive.
 - Zacharias was instructed to name the child John, a name reflecting God's favor.
 - That Zechariah and Elizabeth would experience joy and gladness.
 - Many would rejoice at his birth. (Multitudes heard John preach.)
 - The child would be **"great in the sight of the Lord."**
 - John would be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from the womb.
 - Another aspect of the angel's promise related to John's ministry.
 - He would turn their hearts from sin to the Lord their God
 - He would **"make ready a people prepared for the Lord."**
- **Why was John needed in God's plan of salvation?**
- **What do you learn from these verses? Plans are important but useless if never acted upon. Acting without a plan is equally futile.**



Doubt Expressed (Luke 1:18-20)

- We live in an era of mass communications from the news media, internet, social media, and more ...
 - The sources of our information are often unknown (anonymous). We wisely question what we hear.
- God's Word found in the Bible, is trustworthy. We know the source (God) and we know from history that every promise has been or is being fulfilled.
- Zechariah, like us, has a healthy amount of doubt. He *knows* Elizabeth is too old to bear a child.
 - ***"How shall I know this? I am an old man, and my wife is stricken in years"***
- The angel announces his name, his authority, and who sent him with the message.
 - ***"I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee"***
 - To stand in God's presence means to have ongoing access to God.
 - Gabriel did not come to Zechariah under his own initiative but was sent by God.
- ***"to show thee these glad tidings"*** – Glad tidings that Zechariah would have a son, but more importantly that his child would be instrumental in God's great plan to save his people.
 - The announcement about John was part of the larger good news of Jesus our Messiah.
- ***"And behold"*** – The angel Gabriel wanted Zacharias to pay attention and understand.
 - Zechariah had demanded proof to validate what he had been told.
 - Therefore a sign was given, but not one that Zechariah had expected.
 - Zechariah would become dumb/mute (unable to speak) until John was born.
 - For more than nine months, Zechariah would reflect on his encounter with Gabriel.
- God has the power to do what He says He will do. We should be careful in expressing doubt.
- **What circumstances cause you to doubt God's promises?**
- **Was Zechariah's inability to talk punishment or was it discipline? What's the difference?**



Reality Seen (Luke 1:21-25)

- Normally, the priest would offer incense and then come out to the people who had gathered for worship. The worshippers marveled that Zechariah was staying so long in the Holy of Holies.
- When Zechariah came out, he could not speak. With signs he conveyed that he saw a vision.
 - The people could only imagine the mysterious presence of God in the Holy of Holies.
- Zechariah continued his priestly duties for the week and then went to his home.
 - You would think after such an encounter, Zechariah would want to go home immediately. But he continued his one-week tour of duty until the following Sabbath
 - His speechless service must have been a silent witness to a supernatural encounter.
- ***"And after those days"*** Luke does not specify how much time passed but Elizabeth conceived.
 - Zechariah likely wrote his story to communicate everything to Elizabeth.
 - She hid herself for five months – perhaps until her condition was apparent.
- God answered their prayers. Elizabeth was a recipient of God's favor. Her social stigma was removed.
- **Are you patient and trusting when you pray?**

Biblical Truth:

God's promises fulfill His redemptive plan for His creation.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

