

what child is this?



THE GOSPEL OF LUKE
Chapter 1



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SUNDAY TEACHING

SUNDAY	THEME	SERMON TEXT
27 October	The Certainty of Salvation	Luke 1:1-4
3 November	The Promise of Salvation	Luke 1:5-25
10 November	The Favour of Salvation	Luke 1:26-38
17 November	Thanksgiving (Special Combined Service)	Various
24 November	Next Steps (Special Service)	Various
1 December	The Joy of Salvation	Luke 1:39-56
8 December	The Herald of Salvation	Luke 1:57-66
15 December	The Horn of Salvation	Luke 1:67-80

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Luke, the author of this Gospel, was likely a companion of Paul (Colossians 4:14) and a physician. Some scholars also believe he could be the unnamed person praised in 2 Corinthians 8:18, though this is less certain. His Gospel and its sequel, the book of Acts, were likely written in the early 60s AD. What makes Luke's writings remarkable is that, although he was a Gentile, his message reaches beyond cultural boundaries to embrace all people—Jew and Gentile alike. Luke's Gospel emphasizes the good news of salvation for everyone, regardless of nationality, gender, or social status.

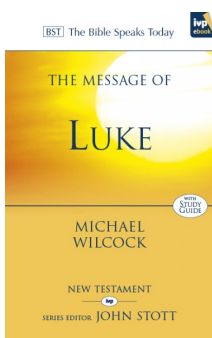
Luke's background as a doctor also shines through in his writing. He often uses the Greek word "sōzō," meaning both "heal" and "save," reflecting his view of Jesus as both Healer and Saviour, offering salvation for the whole person—body and soul. His attention to detail and compassion for people in every situation makes his Gospel deeply personal, as he highlights how God's grace touches individuals from all walks of life.

In the opening verses of Luke's Gospel (Luke 1:1-4), he outlines his purpose: to give certainty to believers, like Theophilus, about the things they have been taught. Luke's Gospel is based on careful investigation, making it a reliable and orderly account of Jesus' life.

Chapter 1 introduces us to four key events that lead up to Jesus' birth: the announcement of John the Baptist's birth, the angel Gabriel's message to Mary, the meeting between Mary and Elizabeth, and the births of both John and Jesus. Luke starts his Gospel, not with Jesus' public ministry, but with God breaking His 400-year silence—announcing the births of two miraculous children, John and Jesus, who will change the course of history.

As we study these passages, we're invited to reflect on the profound and unique significance of these two pregnancies. Luke's narrative calls us to ask the question: *What Child is this?*

Further resources



Wilcock, Michael. *The Message of Luke.* Bible Speaks Today Series. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1984

STUDY ONE - LUKE 1:1-4

Share

Share a time when you doubted something but later found it to be true. How did it change your outlook?

Observe & Reflect

Read Luke 1:1-4

1. What do we learn about Luke's purpose for writing this Gospel in verses 1-4? What kind of account does Luke say he has written?
2. How should this influence the way we study what he says?
3. How does the phrase 'fulfilled among us' place this account in a broader biblical context?
4. Why do you think Luke emphasises that his account is based on eyewitness testimony?
5. What is Luke hoping his account will achieve for Theophilus? Why do you think this is important?
6. What does it mean to have "certainty" about the truth of the Gospel?
7. How does Luke's careful investigation and writing reflect God's concern for our faith?

Next steps

8. How can we grow in our confidence in the truth of the Gospel in our own lives?
9. What are some practical ways we can encourage others who are struggling with doubt?
10. In what areas of your faith do you need to seek more certainty or clarity? What steps can you take to work through these questions?

STUDY TWO - LUKE 1:5-25

Share

What's the most surprising or unexpected thing that has ever happened to you?
How did it impact your life?

Observe & Reflect

Read Luke 1:5-25

1. Describe Zechariah and Elizabeth's character. What does it mean that they were both 'righteous' before God?
2. Why is their inability to have children significant?
3. How does Zechariah initially respond to the angel's appearance in vs 12? How does this response change in vs 18?
4. Summarise the angel's message in vs 11 – 20.
5. Why do you think Zechariah struggled to believe the angel's promise?
6. How does Elizabeth respond to her pregnancy? What does her reaction reveal about her faith?

Next Steps

7. How does Zechariah's doubt mirror our own struggles in trusting God? In what areas are we particularly tempted to doubt that God will fulfil his promises?
8. What can we learn from Elizabeth's joy and gratitude in this passage?
9. How can we help one another to respond in faith when God's plans and purposes seem impossible to us?

STUDY THREE - LUKE 1:26-38

Share

Have you ever been given a responsibility you felt unprepared for? How did you respond?

Observe & Reflect

Read Luke 1:26-38

1. How does the angel Gabriel's greeting to Mary differ from his greeting to Zechariah? What might this difference suggest?
2. What is Mary's initial reaction to Gabriel's announcement? How does her response contrast to Zechariah's?
3. How does the angel reassure Mary? What does his response to both Mary and Zechariah reveal about the plans of God?
4. How does the angel describe Jesus in verses 31-33? What is the significance of these titles (see 2 Samuel 7:11-13, Daniel 7:14)?
5. What is the significance of Mary's child being conceived by the Holy Spirit? What does this reveal about the child's nature and character?
6. Re-read 1:30-37. How do Gabriel's words reveal that God is doing something profoundly new in the birth of Jesus?
7. How does Mary describe herself in verse 38? What does her final response reveal about her character?

Next Steps

8. How can we learn from Mary's humble acceptance of God's plan for her life?
9. In what areas of life do we need to trust God more, even when we feel unprepared? Try to be specific and pray about these things.
10. Gabriel declares to Mary 'nothing is impossible with God.' How should this truth shape our trust and confidence in God's eternal plans and purposes? What might this mean for our prayer life? How can knowing this truth bring boldness and contentment?

STUDY FOUR - LUKE 1:39-56

Share

Have you ever had a moment where you couldn't help but praise or thank God? What led to it?

Observe & Reflect

Read Luke 1:39-56

1. Why do you think Mary visited Elizabeth after hearing the angel's message (verses 39-40)?
2. How does Elizabeth react when she sees Mary in verses 41-45? What does she praise Mary for?
3. What does Mary's song of praise reveal about her understanding of God's character and actions?
4. How does Mary's song reflect the larger biblical story of God's promises to Israel?
5. What does this passage teach us about the joy and humility of those who trust God?

Next Steps

6. How can we cultivate a heart of praise like Mary, especially in challenging circumstances?
7. In what ways can we, like Elizabeth, encourage others in their faith journey?
8. How does this passage challenge the way we think about God's power and mercy?

STUDY FIVE - LUKE 1:57-66

Share

Share a time in your life when you felt like God was finally answering a long-awaited prayer.

Observe & Reflect

Read Luke 1:57-66

1. How do Zechariah and Elizabeth's friends and family respond to the birth of John (verses 57-58)?
2. Why is there conflict surrounding the naming of Zechariah and Elizabeth's son?
3. How does the restoration of Zechariah's speech in verse 64 reflect God's faithfulness? What does he do with his first words?
4. What impact does John's birth have on the surrounding community (verses 65-66)? Why do you think they responded like this?
5. How do these events prepare the way for Jesus' ministry?

Next Steps

6. How can we cultivate a heart of thankfulness and praise when God answers our prayers? How can we cultivate this heart when God hasn't answered our prayers in the way we would like?
7. What does this story teach us about trusting God's timing in our lives?
8. How can we share the impact of God's work in our lives with others, like Zechariah did?

STUDY SIX - LUKE 1:67-80

Share

Can you recall a time when you felt like God gave you a new sense of purpose or direction?

Observe & Reflect

Read Luke 1:67-80

1. What is the significance of Zechariah being 'filled with the Holy Spirit' in verse 67?
2. How does Zechariah describe God's faithfulness in verses 68-75?
3. What role does John the Baptist play in God's salvation plan, according to verses 76-77?
4. How does Zechariah's prophecy connect to the larger promises of the Old Testament? (eg Ps 111:7-9, Gen 22:17-18, 2 Sam 22:2-3, Mal 3:1, Isa 9:1-2)
5. Salvation is a key concept in Luke—and a complex one. What aspect of salvation is emphasized in Luke 1:77? In Luke 1:74-75?
6. How does Zechariah describe God's character in vs78? What is the effect of salvation in vs 78- 79?
7. How would you summarise what this passage reveals about the coming of Jesus and God's plan for redemption?

Next Steps

8. How can we help one another be filled with gratitude for God's faithfulness in our own lives?
9. What are some practical ways we can prepare ourselves and others for Christ's return, just as John did for Christ's first coming?
10. Consider what it will look like for you this week to meditate on all that God has done in Jesus and to serve him without fear.

