

The Good News About Jesus as Luke Wrote It

Chapter 1:1-80

HoneyBee base version for oral translation

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Background

- Many eyewitnesses to Jesus' life and teaching were still alive, helping Luke to write an accurate account.
- Theophilus was likely a Jewish convert to Christianity who had financial means to help Luke travel and to purchase parchment paper.
- There were so many Jewish priests from Levi's tribe that they served only once in their lifetime, when chosen by lot.
- Great events in family history were often remembered as a poem or a song.
- For 1000 years, the Jewish people had been expecting God to send a descendant of King David, who would rule over all nations.
- Engagements were considered to be as binding as marriage.
- To be barren was a cause of shame to a woman, because she had not birthed new members for her family, clan and tribe.
- In rural communities, neighbors join in with family celebrations.
- Circumcision indicated adherence to Jewish traditional law, and was the occasion at which parents revealed a son's name.
- Sons were typically named after grandfathers or fathers.
- Writing tablets were usually a wooden board coated with wax. A short, pointed stick was used to make marks (to write) in the wax.
- Most adults learned to read Aramaic words and phrases.
- Holy Spirit inspired prophecies followed biblical themes and content.
- God gave to the promised Messiah several titles, including "My Servant."

History

- Luke had traveled in Judea, interviewing apostles and other eyewitnesses, whilst Paul was held at Caesarea.
- Luke also conferred with Mark at Paul's behest (2 Tim. 4:11).
- By the time Luke wrote his gospel, John the Baptizer had a huge popular following, had baptized and identified Jesus, and had been executed by the Jew's king Herod. [The Herods ruled by Roman appointment, and were ethnically not Jewish.]
- Six months earlier, Gabriel had foretold Elizabeth's pregnancy.
- Mary had never had relations with a man, so could not become pregnant naturally.

¹ Licensed for use under Creative Commons. Text in *italics* is implied from historical or cultural context. Superscripted ^(pl) means plural, ^(sg) singular, ^(inc) inclusive, ^(exc) exclusive pronoun.

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- At this time, Judea and Galilee Jewish regions remain under Roman domination, military occupation, and heavy taxation.
- Zecharia had lost his ability to speak after he disbelieved an angel's message.
- Elizabeth had become pregnant despite her lifelong barrenness and her old age.

Themes

- The gospel comes from eyewitnesses who saw and heard Jesus.
- Christian teaching must be supported by facts.
- What God did for Sarah, he is able to do for Elizabeth.
- "Nothing will be impossible with God."
- God will one day punish the wicked and prosper the righteous.
- A new age of prophetic utterance began around the birth of John.
- John's task would be to introduce Messiah Jesus to Israel.
- God eventually fulfills every promise that he made through his ancient prophets.

Luke writes eyewitness accounts for Theophilus²

¹⁻² My noble *friend* Theophilus,³ many people saw the things that Jesus did while he was with us, from the time when he started his ministry⁴. These eyewitnesses *served God by teaching people the message about the Lord Jesus*. They wrote what they heard/learned from the people who saw Jesus and heard him, and have been helping other people to learn what Jesus said and what he did. ³ Because I have investigated /studied these things/facts, I decided to write them down for you, honorable Theophilus. This book starts at the beginning and recounts everything in an orderly manner. ⁴ This book will allow you to learn the facts/truth about Jesus that others have taught to you.

An angel from God foretells John's soon birth⁵

⁵ *About 1800 years after Israel/Jacob died*,⁶ when the first king named Herod ruled over Judea land/district, there was a priest named Zechariah. He belonged to a priests' group called the Abijah group. He and his wife Elizabeth were both descended from Aaron, who was the first priest in the Israel people-group. ⁶ God saw that Zechariah and Elizabeth were both righteous,⁷ because they were obeying all the Lord's laws and rules. ⁷ But they had no children, because she was unable to birth children. And now they were both very old.

⁸ One day Zechariah's group was doing their work in the Temple in Jerusalem city, and he was serving as a priest in God's presence. ⁹ Following their custom, the other priests chose him by lot to enter the holy room in the temple, and to burn incense *there to God*. ¹⁰ While he was burning the incense, many people were outside *in the temple's courtyard*, praying.

² OR Luke writes a book about Jesus for Theophilus.

³ Theophilus was a man's real name, so it is not necessary to tell its meaning (Loved by God) in your translation

⁴ OR teaching people. Jesus was a Rabbi/religious teacher who traveled around to various cities, towns and villages.

⁵ OR Luke begins by telling about how John was born.

⁶ OR *About 2000 years after Abraham died*. Luke does not include this information in his account, but it might be helpful for getting the historical context and timeline.

⁷ OR were living/behaving righteously. OR were doing what was right.

¹¹ Then⁸ an angel named Gabriel, sent from Yahweh, appeared to Zechariah. The angel was standing at the incense altar's right-hand side. ¹² When Zechariah saw the angel, he was startled and became very afraid. ¹³ But the angel said to him, "Zechariah, do not be afraid! When you^(sg) prayed *asking God for a son*, God heard what you prayed. So, He will cause your wife Elizabeth to birth a son. You must name him John. ¹⁴ When he is born, you will feel joy,⁹ and many other people will also feel joy.

¹⁵ The Lord will cause¹⁰ your son to be very important. So, he must never drink wine or any other alcoholic drink, because God's Holy Spirit¹¹ will lead/control/empower him from before he is born.

¹⁶ Your son/John will persuade many people in Israel to turn away from their sins, to please their God Yahweh.¹² ¹⁷ As God's Spirit enables him to preach powerfully as the prophet Elijah did, he will precede the Messiah.¹³ He will cause parents to love their children more, and he will cause many people who do not obey God *to start doing* the wise things that righteous people do. He will do this to help many people to be ready when the Lord comes."

¹⁸ Then Zechariah replied to the angel, "Because I am an old man, and my wife is an old woman, I am not sure that what you say is true." ¹⁹ Then the angel said to him, "I am Gabriel, *the angel who spoke to the prophet Daniel!* I stand near God in heaven, and God sent me to come tell you this good news *about a son*."¹⁴ ²⁰ What I have told you will certainly happen at the time that God has decided. But because you did not believe what I told you, God now makes you unable to talk until the day that your son is born!"

²¹ While Zechariah and the angel were talking, the people in the temple's courtyard were waiting for Zechariah to come out *from the Holy Room*. They were wondering, "Why is he staying in the Holy Room for such a long time?"¹⁵ ²² When Zechariah came out from the Holy Room, he was not able to speak to the people. Because he could not talk, he made motions with his hands *to try to convey/describe what had happened inside*. Then they realized that he had seen a vision from God¹⁶ while he was in the Holy Room.

²³ When Zechariah's time to work as a priest in the Temple was finished, he left Jerusalem city and returned to his home. ²⁴ Sometime later, his wife Elizabeth became pregnant. She did not leave their house for five months, *until other people could see that she was pregnant*.¹⁷ ²⁵ She kept thinking, "The Lord God has enabled me *to become pregnant* at this time, because he saw the shame I felt amongst people *because I have no children!*"

⁸ OR Suddenly. OR Unexpectedly.

⁹ OR be very happy.

¹⁰ OR *will consider*. John would be very important and great in the Lord's eyes/thoughts.

¹¹ OR the Holy Spirit, who is God. Holy Spirit was a Name for God in Isaiah 63:10-11, borrowed by NT writers for the Spirit promised in the New Covenant.

¹² OR the Lord God.

¹³ Malachi 4:6.

¹⁴ OR your son.

¹⁵ OR They were thinking that he should not be staying in the Holy Room for such a long time! This is a rhetorical question which you can translate as a statement if you wish, but indicate that the people were really worried.

¹⁶ OR something that God showed him.

¹⁷ OR *because she knew that people would laugh at her if she told them she was pregnant*.

The angel Gabriel announces how the Messiah will be born¹⁸

²⁶ Six months after Elizabeth became pregnant, God send the angel Gabriel to Nazareth city in Galilee region in Judea land. ²⁷ There he appeared to a virgin whose name was Mary. She was engaged to be married¹⁹ to a man named Joseph, who was descended from King David. ²⁸ The angel greeted Mary and said, “The Lord your (sg) God is with you and has graciously decided to bless you greatly!”

²⁹ But Mary was very confused when she heard that, wondering what the angel meant by these words. ³⁰ Then the angel said to her, “Mary, God is very pleased with you^(sg), so do not be afraid. ³¹ You will *soon* become pregnant and birth a baby son, and you must name him Jesus. ³² He will become a powerful man whom people will call the Most-High God’s Son. God, the Lord, will make him to become king *over the Israel people group*, replacing his ancestor King David. ³³ He will rule over Jacob’s descendants, forever. He will rule as king forever!”

³⁴ Then Mary replied to the angel, “I am a virgin, so how can I birth a baby?” ³⁵ The angel replied, “God’s Holy Spirit will come to you, and God’s power will enable you to become pregnant *while you are still a virgin*. As a result, the child whom you will birth will be so different from all other people,²⁰ that they will call him “God’s Son/Child”.

³⁶ As you know, your cousin/relative Elizabeth is very old, and *people say that she cannot birth children*. But she *has been pregnant for nearly six months*, and she also will birth a son! ³⁷ This will happen, because God can do everything that he chooses to do!” ³⁸ Then Mary said, “I make myself to be the Lord’s servant girl. I wait for everything you have said about me to happen.”

Then the angel left her.

Mary Goes to See Elizabeth²¹

³⁹ Soon after that, Mary quickly got ready and went/travelled to the town amongst the hills in Judea *district*, where Zechariah lived. ⁴⁰ She entered his house²² and greeted *his wife* Elizabeth. ⁴¹ As soon as Elizabeth heard Mary greet her, the baby moved inside Elizabeth’s womb. God’s Holy Spirit took control over Elizabeth, ⁴² and she said loudly *to Mary*,

“God has blessed you more than he has blessed any other woman, and he has blessed the child whom you will birth! ³ Now I thank God that he has sent you to visit/see me, because you will be my Lord’s mother! ⁴⁴ I realize/know this because as soon as I heard you greet me, the baby inside my womb moved because he was so happy *that you had come here*. ⁴⁵ You will be very happy, because you believed that which the Lord/God told you would come true.”

¹⁸ OR Gabriel appears to Mary.

¹⁹ OR Her parents had promised that she would be married

²⁰ OR so devoted/separated to God. The Greek says literally that the baby to be born will be “holy.” “Holy child” here probably has the OT connotation of being unique, having no equal, rather than the ritual sense of “dedicated,” or of the personal sense of “devoted.”

²¹ OR Mary stays with Elizabeth for three months.

²² It is inferred that Mary came under Zechariah’s protection.

Mary sings praise to God²³

⁴⁶ Then Mary sang this song:²⁴

“With my whole self²⁵ I praise the Lord,

⁴⁷ I rejoice because God is the one who saves/rescues me.

⁴⁸ He chose me when I was his humble servant girl.

⁴⁹ God the Mighty One has done great things for me,
there is no other God like Him.

⁵⁰ He shows mercy²⁶ to all who are descended from those who obey him.

⁵¹ He has used his great power to do amazing things!

He has defeated his proud enemies.

⁵² He scatters powerful kings, but he honors those who were humble.

⁵³ He has given good things to eat to people who are hungry now.

And He sends away hungry people who are rich now.

⁵⁴ He has remembered to act mercifully towards Israel’s descendants who serve him.

⁵⁵ Because he promised this to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants, forever.”

⁵⁶ Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months. Then she returned to her home in Nazareth, *before Elizabeth birthed her son.*

Elizabeth births her son²⁷

⁵⁷ When it was time for Elizabeth to birth her child, she birthed a son. ⁵⁸ Her neighbors and relatives²⁸ heard that the Lord/God blessed her by enabling her to bear a child, so they were happy along with Elizabeth. ⁵⁹ Seven days later,²⁹ when they came to watch the child be circumcised, they were going to name him with his father’s name, Zechariah. ⁶⁰ But Elizabeth said,³⁰ “No, not Zechariah. We shall name him John.”

⁶¹ Someone said to her, “No one in your family is named John, so you should not give him that name!” ⁶² Then they made motions with their hands to Zechariah, for him to choose what name he wanted to give to his son. ⁶³ So Zechariah signaled/motioned that they should bring to him a tablet upon which to write.³¹ When they did so, he wrote on it, “His name is John.” All who were there were surprised! ⁶⁴ Immediately, Zechariah was able to speak again, and he began to praise God.

²³ OR Mary’s Song.

²⁴ Verses 46b through 55 form one long song or poem. Try to follow your language’s patterns for songs or poems.

²⁵ OR my whole heart/soul/body. OR all my being. OR I. If you have an idiom in your language meaning someone’s whole self, you may use it here (e.g., with all my liver...). In Hebrew poetry, “my soul” often stands in place of “I” or “me”.

²⁶ OR acts kindly.

²⁷ OR John is born.

²⁸ OR family members.

²⁹ OR On the eighth day (after John was born).

³⁰ OR But the baby’s mother said.

³¹ OR a wax writing tablet. OR a waxed wooden board and a pointed writing stick.

⁶⁵ All their neighbors were amazed/awestruck! Many other people also, who lived all over the highlands/hilly places in Judea, heard about these things and talked about them. ⁶⁶ Everyone who heard about these things kept thinking about them. They were saying, “We wonder what this child will *do for God when he grows up!*” They wondered that because they were sure that the Lord/God would be helping him *in a powerful way*.³²

Zechariah sings to his son about the Messiah³³

⁶⁷ After Zechariah’s son was born, God’s Holy Spirit enabled Zechariah³⁴ to speak/sing these words³⁵ that came from God:

⁶⁸ “We must praise the Lord,
the God whom we^(inc) in the Israel people-group worship,
because he loved us and came to free us, his people-group, to free us from our enemies.

⁶⁹ God will send to us *a king* who will powerfully save us,
the Messiah who is descended from King David, whom he called his servant.

⁷⁰ Long ago God caused his prophets to say

⁷¹ that he will rescue us from our enemies, and from the rulers who hate us.

⁷² God will act mercifully towards us,
when he fulfills what he promised to our ancestors when he made a solemn covenant with them.

⁷³ That is what God solemnly promised to our ancestor Abraham that he will do.

⁷⁴ God told him that he would rescue us from our powerful enemies.

As a result, God will enable us to serve him without being afraid, ⁷⁵ so that we will be completely dedicated to him, living righteously all our lives long.”

⁷⁶ Then Zechariah said/sang this to his young son:

“My child,³⁶ people will call you the Most Powerful God’s prophet.

Before the Lord’s *Messiah* comes,
you will help people to be ready *to welcome* him.

⁷⁷ You will tell God’s people how he will forgive them
and how he will save them from being punished for their sins.

⁷⁸ Our God will do so, because he is very kind to us.
Just as daylight comes when the sun rises,
so God will fulfill his promises when the Messiah comes to us from heaven.

⁷⁹ We are still waiting and we know that we must die,
but Messiah will guide us so that we will live forever in peace *with God*.”

⁸⁰ The next ³⁰ years, Zechariah’s son John grew up and became spiritually strong. He lived in a

³² OR the Lord obviously was with him.

³³ OR Zechariah’s prophecy song.

³⁴ OR inspired Zechariah. OR helped Zechariah.

³⁵ OR this song. Verses 68-79 are in the form of a song or of a poem. Try to use your language’s form for songs or poems.

³⁶ The Greek word *paidon* can be translated either ‘servant’ or ‘child’ depending on its context. See 1:69.

wilderness³⁷ until he began to preach publicly to the Israel people-group.

³⁷ OR desolate region.