



Luke 1:1-38 -“Announcing the Births”

OBSERVE & REFLECT

(This section is designed to encourage us to reflect on and observe the scripture and weekend sermon.)

READ Luke 1:1-38

- ☀ Read the text at least twice. Try reading the text from two different translations.
- ☀ What do you observe in the text? What jumps out at you and grabs your attention? What questions do you have from the text? Pay attention to any action words or phrases and observe what the implications are.

INVESTIGATE & APPLY

(This section focuses on what the scripture has to say as we dig deeper into the Word. It is oriented to create discussion on the Scripture.)

Open: Describe a time when someone asked you to do something that would be difficult or scary, but that you knew would also be good. What was your initial reaction to the request?

1. Verses 1-4 form a prologue to the Gospel of Luke. What does the prologue tell us about Luke's purposes and methods?
2. We read of Gabriel's visit to Zechariah in verses 5-25. Describe Zechariah and Elizabeth. Who are they, and what was their life like before the angel visits?
3. What is Luke seeking to emphasize through the details he chooses to tell of Zechariah and Elizabeth's story? How does Zechariah show a mixture of half-faith and devotion in his encounter with Gabriel?
4. Verses 26-38 shift from Zechariah to Mary. In what ways are the stories of Zechariah and Mary similar? In what ways are they different?
5. What is Mary's response to the message from the angel? What do her words show you about her faith and devotion to God?
6. What are the implications of the Holy Spirit coming upon Mary and the power of the Most High God overshadowing her?

“Put all this together- the conception of a baby, the power of God, and the challenge to all human empires- and we can see why the story is so explosive. Perhaps some of the controversy about whether Mary could have conceived Jesus without a human father is because deep down, we don't want to think that there could be a king who could claim this sort of origin and therefore this sort of absolute allegiance.”

-NT Wright

NEXT STEPS

- ☀ Think of something that God has called you to- a task or a role, perhaps in the last five years. How did you respond- more like Zechariah, or more like Mary?
- ☀ In the midst of the fulfillment of God's promises and purposes for the whole world, he also considers the needs, hopes and fears of ordinary people like Zechariah, Elizabeth, and Mary. How do you respond to this as you consider your own needs, hopes and fears?
- ☀ Spend some time in prayer:
 - Praise God that he fulfills his purposes through ordinary people in the midst of their ordinary lives.
 - Pray for courage to hear and respond to God's call like Mary- with humility and acceptance.

*this study is adapted from N.T. Wright's "For Everyone" Study Guide on Luke

Luke 1:1-38

[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.

[5] In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. [6] And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. [7] But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.

[8] Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, [9] according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. [10] And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. [11] And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. [12] And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. [13] But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. [14] And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, [15] for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. [16] And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, [17] and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."

[18] And Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." [19] And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. [20] And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time." [21] And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple. [22] And 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] And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home.

[24] After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, [25] "Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people."

[26] In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, [27] to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. [28] And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" [29] But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. [30] And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. [31] And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. [32] He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, [33] and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

[34] And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

[35] And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. [36] And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. [37] For nothing will be impossible with God." [38] And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.