

## Luke 1A

[Luke 1:1](#) Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us,  
[Luke 1:2](#) just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word,  
[Luke 1:3](#) it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write *it* out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus;  
[Luke 1:4](#) so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.

- What we know of Christ's time on earth comes principally from 4 men: Matt, Mark, Luke and John
  - Their writing was inspired by the Holy Spirit, as all scripture must be
    - The Holy Spirit drove them and organized their thoughts and even brought specific words to mind
    - But they didn't necessarily sense the HS influence in the moment – they had a simpler, natural purpose
    - Luke, like many authors in the NT, states his purpose immediately in his gospel
  - Of the 4 gospels, two were written by Disciples (Matt & John) and 2 were written by later followers (Mark and Luke)
    - Mark was a close companion of Peter, and his account is probably told through Peter's eyes, to a large extent
    - Luke was a faithful traveler with Paul, and even though Paul didn't accompany Jesus, he did receive direct revelation from Christ after the resurrection
- Luke was a physician and a gentile, the only known few gentile author of scripture (along with Acts, which together are 27% of the NT)
  - He wrote his gospel not long after Christ's death, probably during Paul's Roman imprisonment
  - He was a physician, which was not the same thing as being a doctor today
    - No one liked to deal with the body, especially sick and dying bodies

- It was unpleasant and considered dirty work
- And Jews would never consider such a role, since they would be considered unclean
- So the role usually went to Gentiles and more than that, - often to Gentile slaves or indentured servants
  - This may have been the relationship between Luke and Theophilis, the intended audience of Luke's gospel
- Luke's scientific nature meant he took a very careful approach to his writing
  - Luke tell Theophilis that since others have tried to write about Christ's life based on eyewitness accounts, he wants to try his hand at it too
  - But Luke suggests in the first verses of his gospel that he is in a better position to write
    - He has investigated carefully
    - Placed everything in chronological order
      - His gospel sets the record among the gospels
      - But it was not necessarily perfectly chronological – the word is **kathexes** which means orderly sequence
  - And his purpose is to ensure the reader knows he can believe what he's been taught
- Likewise, that should be our purpose today – to believe what we've been taught – but ensuring we get the facts right
  - Knowing the facts of our faith strengthens it
  - Those who would diminish the importance and value of study the Bible don't appreciate its relationship to faith

[Rom. 10:17](#) So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

- The very foundation of our relationship with Christ begins with His word
  - Our ability to hear comes from the word of Christ

- And then our ability to grow in that faith continues through the word

[Heb. 5:11](#) Concerning him we have much to say, and *it is* hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

[Heb. 5:12](#) For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

[Heb. 5:13](#) For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant.

[Heb. 5:14](#) But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

- We are commanded to press on to maturity by Heb 6:1 – it's not an option – to stay immature is to disobey the Lord
  - Do you abstain from idol worship?
  - Do you come to church regularly and participate in communion?
  - Do you try to lead a Christ-like life pleasing to God?
  - Then you must learn the word as well
- Luke is helping his readers fulfill that responsibility through his giving of an accurate, complete account of Christ's life

[Luke 1:5](#) In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

[Luke 1:6](#) They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord.

[Luke 1:7](#) But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years.

- Judea is the name for modern day Israel
  - In Jesus' day, it was a province of the Roman Empire, whose governor was Herod the Great

- The nation of Israel, though under Roman rule, still had permission to rule themselves according to their law
  - The temple was standing – Herod had made it even grander
  - The sacrifices still took place
  - Priests still officiated at the temple
- One of those priests was Zacharias from the division of Abijah
  - David divided the sons of Levi (priests) into 24 divisions with a family leader as head of each division
  - Aijah was the leader of one of those divisions
  - Each division served in the temple for one week twice in a year
- His wife, Elizabeth, was also descended from a priestly family, Aaron
  - God wanted to be clear that the product of this union would be fit to serve God, as the priests serve Him in the temple
  - Moreover, they were godly and blameless
    - The term blameless is one we've seen before – Noah was called blameless in Genesis
    - Doesn't mean without sin – means without giving opportunity for men to find fault

[Rom. 12:18](#) If possible, so far as it depends on you, be **at peace** with all men.

- Don't lose sight of the fact that when God wishes to bestow on men the greatest of honors, He will select men and women who lead godly lives
  - God called Noah blameless
  - Abraham was told to be blameless
  - Job was blameless

- David declares repeated in the Psalms the virtues of being blameless
  - We should all make living a blameless life a high priority, so that God might decide to use us for great service and honor
- Only one problem with this marriage – the union was childless
  - Where have we seen this before?
    - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob
    - Whenever God wishes to make the point that a child given to a couple will be especially important in His plan, he delays it's arrival
    - Which emphasizes that when it arrives it was given by Him
  - But because this birth will be closely connected to the birth of His Son, the giving of the child will be preceded by angelic announcers

[Luke 1:8](#) ¶ Now it happened *that* while he was performing his priestly service before God in the *appointed* order of his division,

[Luke 1:9](#) according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

[Luke 1:10](#) And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering.

[Luke 1:11](#) And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense.

[Luke 1:12](#) Zacharias was troubled when he saw *the angel*, and fear gripped him.

[Luke 1:13](#) But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John.

[Luke 1:14](#) “You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth.

[Luke 1:15](#) “For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother’s womb.

[Luke 1:16](#) “And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God.

[Luke 1:17](#) “It is he who will go *as a forerunner* before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

- Zacharias was in the temple performing his duties during one of his two weeks per year,
  - He would have traveled from home to the temple for the week of work – a business trip
  - Each day, there was incense burned before the altar as part of the daily sacrifice
    - Burning the incense was considered a special honor
  - Since there were so many priests in each division, each priest would be given only one opportunity in a lifetime to burn incense before the throne
  - Today, Zacharias wins the lottery, as it were, and is selected to go into the Holy Place and burn incense
    - Do you think the day of his selection was an accident?
    - We know that God selected him that day, so that this day Zacharias could be used by God
- The angel appears as Zacharias stands before the altar
  - Naturally, he is afraid, but the angel tells him not to fear
  - The angel says his petition (his prayers) have been answered
    - Zacharias had been praying for a child, a son
    - God was answering his prayers
  - His son would be named John and he would have a special place in God's plan
- The very last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, God gives his final words to Israel prior to the arrival of His son, the Messiah
  - It was a time of great apostasy, the nation of Israel almost to a man gone astray, corrupt
- And God says to Israel in Malachi:

[Mal. 2:17](#) ¶ You have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet you say, “How have we wearied *Him*?” In that you say, “Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and He delights in them,” or, “Where is the God of justice?”

[Mal. 3:1](#) ¶ “Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” says the LORD of hosts.

[Mal. 3:2](#) “But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap.

And again

[Mal. 4:1](#) ¶ “For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze,” says the LORD of hosts, “so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.”

[Mal. 4:5](#) ¶ “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD.

[Mal. 4:6](#) “He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.”

- These final words were a stern warning that before the coming of the Messiah, God would send a messenger ahead of him
  - But the context of Malachi makes clear that he was referring to Elijah himself returning and the time would be at Christ’s coming to establish His kingdom – in other words, the end times
    - But Malachi’s prophecy concerns the end times, the second coming of Christ and His setting up of His kingdom on earth
- So why does the angel refer to Malachi when describing the birth of John the Baptist?
  - Is John the Baptist Elijah?

[John 1:19](#) ¶ This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?”

[John 1:20](#) And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.”

[John 1:21](#) They asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” And he \*said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.”

[John 1:22](#) Then they said to him, “Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?”

[John 1:23](#) He said, “I am A VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, ‘MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD,’ as Isaiah the prophet said.”

- Later in Luke, Zacharias actually quotes from this same part of Isaiah 40

[Is. 40:3](#) ¶ A voice is calling,  
 “Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness;  
 Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.

- Interestingly, Isaiah 40 includes elements of both Christ’s first and second coming – giving prophecy of both events in the same chapter
- So John the Baptist is fulfilling some of the prophecy of the Messiah’s arrival found in Isaiah, at least His first coming
  - Then how is he connected to Christ’s second coming, as the angel suggests with his quotes of Malachi?
    - We know that our God works through pictures and repetition
    - He often places events in the lives of men as pictures or examples of greater things to come
      - Isaac was a picture of Christ as was Joseph
  - Now we see John fulfills Isaiah’s prophecy for a “voice in the wilderness crying out” in advance of Christ’s first coming
    - But this is itself a picture of an even greater event
      - The time when Elijah returns before Christ’s second coming
      - In other words, John the Baptist is a type of Elijah – he is NOT Elijah, but he pictures Elijah’s coming before the “great and terrible day of the Lord”
      - Just as Christ’s second coming has great glory and power than his first coming, so also Elijah’s return will be a greater ministry than John the Baptist’s
- When Luke quotes from Malachi, he adds an interesting detail - that the messenger would prepare a people made ready for the Lord



- John's ministry was first about preparing a people for Christ
  - In Chap 3 we'll study John's baptism of Jesus, but for now consider this
    - When Christ begins his adult ministry, he starts with His baptism
    - In that moment, he immediately has an audience
    - Gathered around John were his disciples who had been hearing about the coming Messiah and the fulfillment of prophecy for a savior – a people made ready for the Lord
    - As soon as Christ is ready to begin His ministry, the Father has already prepared a people to be looking for him and ready to respond
- The Father is still doing this even today
  - The Holy Spirit is the person of the Trinity responsible for preparing hearts to receive the Lord today

[John 6:44](#) “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

[John 6:65](#) And He was saying, “For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.”

[1Cor. 12:3](#) Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus is accursed”; and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.

- So John is a picture of the Holy Spirit's ministry as well, something we will expand on when we get to Chap 3 and Christ's baptism
- Then Zacharias, having heard the angel's words responds:

[Luke 1:18](#) ¶ Zacharias said to the angel, “How will I know this *for certain*? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years.”

- Does this seem familiar? – Abraham said this to God when told he would have a child:

[Gen. 17:16](#) “I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be *a mother of nations*; kings of peoples will come from her.”

[Gen. 17:17](#) Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, “Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear *a child*?”

- Their reactions seem very similar, don’t they?
  - In Abraham’s case, God simply assured Abraham that Ishmael wouldn’t be the chosen son and that another son would be born
  - What about Zacharias?

[Luke 1:19](#) The angel answered and said to him, “I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.

[Luke 1:20](#) “And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time.”

- Why the difference?
  - Consider the words each used and what thoughts were likely behind them
    - Zacharias said, “How will I know for certain?”
      - In other words, he asked for proof, a sign, something that would cement his belief in the angel’s promise
      - He’s standing in front of an angel – one that made him fear – and he needs proof in order to accept the statement he’s heard
      - He doesn’t believe, and the angel says the same thing
      - So to prove his power, the angel makes Zacharias mute
        - Now I’m sure he believed – he got what he asked for: proof!

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- Abraham's statement is different
  - In Chap 15 he was told that he would have a son, and God entered into a covenant to promise him one
  - By Chap 17 Abraham has a son – Ishmael
    - So naturally, Abraham believes he has the promised child
    - When he hears that Sarah will have a natural child, he laughs – astonished – and then exclaims is it possible that I can have a child at this age
    - In other words, he reacts in this astonished way because he believes God can do it!
  - His next comment further supports that view

[Gen. 17:18](#) And Abraham said to God, “Oh that Ishmael might live before You!”

- Abraham asks God to select Ishmael rather than grant him another son – but God refused to do so
- So Zacharias' comment indicated lack of faith while Abraham's was because of faith in God ability to do what He promised
  - But there is likely a second reason that Zacharias question was punished while Abraham's was not
    - The angel speaking to Zacharias quoted OT scripture – Malachi to be exact
    - This was a place in scripture that every devote Jew would know
  - Abraham didn't have the benefit of scripture, yet he still believed God's word
  - It seems God placed higher expectations on Zacharias because he had opportunity to understand what the angel was speaking

[Luke 1:21](#) ¶ The people were waiting for Zacharias, and were wondering at his delay in the temple.

[Luke 1:22](#) But 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.

[Luke 1:23](#) When the days of his priestly service were ended, he went back home.

- Perhaps this is a good lesson to end on for us today
  - Having been given God's word, how familiar are we with it?
  - Do we make learning it a priority in our life?
  - Are we still needing milk and therefore unable to discern good from evil?
  - If God were to place you on the spot like Zacharias, how would you fare?