

Lesson One Luke 1:1–25

Introduction (1:1–4)

1. How did Luke come to write the book which bears his name?
2. What were the original sources of information for the matters of which Luke writes?
3. How did Luke prepare for writing?
4. What was the purpose of Luke's writing?
5. On the basis of this introduction, discuss the value of *The Gospel According to Luke* to us.

Birth of John the Baptist Foretold (1:5–25)

1. Luke began by writing classical Greek (1:1–4). But the Greek of the birth narratives is strongly Hebraistic in style, likely due to the sources from which Luke drew. Luke had endeavored to trace “the course of all things accurately from the first” (v. 3). Who is likely to have been the source of his information with regard to the birth narratives? (You may want to read the first two chapters before answering.)
2. Give the characteristics of John's parents (vv. 5–7).

3. What was Zacharias doing in the temple and what were the people doing outside when the angel appeared? (vv. 8–11; cf. Rev. 5:8 re. the significance of incense).

4. Consider whether Zacharias' "supplication" (vv. 12–13) may not be explained in the light of the longing of pious Israelites at the time (cf. 2:25–32, 38).

5. Summarize the mission of John as brought out in vv. 14–17.

Note: "Fathers" in the phrase "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children" (v. 17) likely refers to the forefathers of the nation. Consult Malachi 4:5–6 (cf. references to Levi and descendants in 2:4–9, and "sons of Jacob" in 3:6), and look for an explanation of the phrase in Isaiah 29:22f; 63:16. Add to that the parallelism with "the disobedient to walk in the wisdom of the just." The present children were alienated from the pious ancient fathers. John would reconcile them.

6. Why did Zacharias stumble over the announcement? (v. 18).

7. Zacharias was given a sign, but no doubt not one such as he would have chosen, for it was at the same time a judgment against his unbelief (vv. 19–23). Explain.

8. See if you can enter into the feelings that moved Elizabeth to retire to herself for five months (vv. 24f). Give your thoughts.

Lesson Two

Luke 1:26–56

Birth of Jesus Foretold (1:26–38)

1. Describe Mary at the time Gabriel came to her (vv. 26f).
2. What puzzled Mary when the angel appeared? (vv. 28–30).
3. How did Gabriel explain himself? (vv. 31–33).
4. The promised son would be “great” (v. 32; cf. v. 15). How is this greatness explained? (vv. 32–33).
5. Relate this announcement to the Old Testament (cf. 2 Sam. 7:11b–16; Is. 9:6–7; Jer. 33:14–26; Ezek. 34:23–24; 37:24–25; etc.).
6. Mary’s question (v. 34) was treated differently than Zacharias’ question (v. 18) had been. How were the questions different?
7. Verse 35 comes as close as the Bible ever comes to explaining the birth (or conception) of Jesus. Pay close attention. Why would the child born of Mary “be called the Son of God”?
8. What would the information about Elizabeth’s conception do for Mary? (vv. 36–37).

9. Summarize Mary's attitude after this explanation (v. 38). Relate her expression to the circumstances and consider how much faith was involved.

Mary's Visit to Elizabeth (1:39–45)

1. Are you surprised at this visit? (vv. 39–40). Explain.

2. What enabled Elizabeth to recognize Mary as the mother of her Lord? (vv. 41–44).

3. What prophecy did Elizabeth make under the influence of the Holy Spirit? (v. 45).

Song of Mary (1:46–56)

1. What personal feelings with regard to what was happening to her did Mary express? (vv. 46–50).

2. She spoke further of God's reversal of the human situation (vv. 51–53). How does this matter apply in her case?

3. Explain how the present divine actions are related to the Old Testament in vv. 54–55 (cf. Gen. 12:1–3; 22:15–18).

4. List characteristics of God to which attention is drawn in this song.